

## Introduction to “21 Days of Prayer”

The Session is inviting our entire church family at Wasaga Beach Community Presbyterian Church to enter into “**21 Days of Prayer**” as we begin to re-vision, and re-imagine, our congregation for the days ahead and the mission God has for us.

In First Thessalonians 5:16-18 (LB) we receive this instruction.

*<sup>16</sup> Always be joyful. <sup>17</sup> Always keep on praying.*

*<sup>18</sup> No matter what happens, always be thankful,*

*for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.*

Prayer is powerful because God commands us to pray, Jesus taught us to pray, and the Holy Spirit enables us to pray. Prayer is a way for us to communicate with God and for Him to speak to us.

God shapes the world and our individual lives by prayer. Prayer is not an add-on to the Christian life but is the very expression of our faith and trust in God. We pray in Jesus Name because he is the one who prays for us and who brings our prayers before God’s throne.

Poet Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) once wrote these immortal lines,

*More things are wrought by prayer  
Then this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend  
For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.*

**This Devotional Guide is designed to lead you through these next 21 days. The intent is that everyone is reflecting and praying on the same theme on the same day. If for some reason you miss a day, please read the devotion for the new day and then catch up with the day you missed!**

Each day begins with:

- A few verses of Scripture to read. Read these slowly several times and think about them before moving on to the meditation.
- A short meditation that sets up the theme of the day.
- Three questions for you to reflect on. It is suggested that you WRITE DOWN your thoughts and reflections, so you have a record of them. This will be useful when we gather for our Re-Visioning and Re-Imagining Day on Saturday September 27<sup>th</sup>.
- A Prayer to pray. We will all be praying this same prayer on the same day. This prayer is a primer. Please add your own prayers to it.

May God bless us as together we spend "*21 Days in Prayer*".

**YOU ARE INVITED TO A TIME OF PRAYER  
ON THE ZOOM PLATFORM**

**EACH THURSDAY FROM 7-8pm**

**SEPTEMBER 11, 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>.**

**To receive the ZOOM link for these on-line  
meetings please e-mail**

**neal.mathers@icloud.com**

## DAY 1 – SEPTEMBER 7

### UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

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#### First Chronicles 12:32 (NLT)

*"From the tribe of Issachar, there were 200 leaders of the tribe with their relatives. All these men understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take".*

#### Second Chronicles 7:13-15 (LB)

*"if my people will humble themselves and pray, and search for me,  
and turn from their wicked ways,  
I will hear them from heaven  
and forgive their sins and heal their land".*

### Meditation

As we begin this 21 Day prayer adventure we find ourselves in a society and world that is so different from our growing up years. Truth is now negotiable. Facts, both historical and scientific, are increasingly dismissed. Our society is no longer a Christian one but a secular one. Secular simply means one with *"attitudes, activities, or other things, that have no religious or spiritual basis"*.

Although it is true that Christianity is still the most adhered to religion in Canada, only 53.2% of Canadians identified as Christians in the 2021 Census. Despite this 53.2% identity, another study revealed that only 19% reported attending group "religious" activities once a month, down from 47% in 2019, the year the COVID pandemic began.

In addition, a 2020 study by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada found that only 10% of Canadians actually attend "religious" services on a weekly basis, a fact confirmed by the latest Ipsos- Reid poll which placed it at 11%. This 11% includes Jews and Muslims as well as Christians.

The bottom line is that the Church in Canada, across denominations, is in crisis. Membership has dropped significantly and those who are left tend to represent the older demographic. In person attendance has fallen. Children and youth are absent in most congregations. Fewer congregations can afford a full-time minister, and fewer people are entering ministry which means that congregations need to find creative solutions for ministry.

In our reading from First Chronicles the leaders of the tribe of Issachar are praised for "*understanding the signs of the times*" and for knowing the best course of action for God's people to take.

This is what we need to do as a congregation. To understand our times and the challenges we face and to seek the mind of Christ, by letting the Holy Spirit guide us, so that we can know the best course of action to embark on. This is why we will spend "*21 Days in Prayer*" before we begin the process of re-visioning and re-imagining our congregational life.

Our second reading from Second Chronicles 7:13-15 helps us to understand how to do that. We are to "*humble ourselves and pray*", seeking God's will, confessing our sins, expecting God to hear our prayers and to "*heal our land*". This is the task before us.

### **Reflection Questions**

What are the major challenges the Church in Canada faces today?

What are the major challenges our congregation faces?

What do you discern we need to do as a congregation to meet the challenges we face?

## **Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ you are the King and Head of the Church, and we are your Body, each one of us is a part of it. We are your hands, your feet, your eyes, and your voice in the world today.

Help me to always remember that I am your light shining in this dark world, pointing others to you. Forgive me when I fail in my calling as a Christian. Forgive our congregation when we are less than you expect us to be.

May your Holy Spirit guide all of our reflections in the next 21 Days so that we might know your plans for our congregation as we seek the new things you have in store for us. Amen!

## **Other Reflections**

## DAY 2

### SEEKING GOD FIRST – SEPTEMBER 8th

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#### Deuteronomy 4:29 (NLT)

*"There you will look for the Lord your God, and if you search for him with all your heart, you will find him".*

#### Matthew 6:33 (GNB)

*"Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things".*

#### Meditation

It is so easy for us to get swept up with our busy schedules, family responsibilities, work commitments, retirement projects, and day to day living that we can easily feel overwhelmed. And as a result, the things of God often get swept to the side or even worse are seen as another commitment that helps to wear us out!

But Jesus wants us to have a set of priorities that puts him and the things of God first. If you like, to reorder our priorities so he is first in our lives. He invites us to, *".. be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you".*

Now Jesus doesn't tell us that this will be easy. He simply says that when we do this we will be spiritually healthy. That when we do this we can trust him to meet all of our needs. As the old saying goes, *"If He's Lord at all, he is Lord of all."* When God is first, everything else will fall into place and the distractions that often keep us from worship, prayer, studying God's Word, and serving him will be seen as what they really are – distractions.

In Deuteronomy 4:29 God promises that if we *"search for him with all our heart,"* we will find him. But searching is a deliberate choice. It suggests time and effort invested into the search. Likewise, seeking first the Kingdom of God is a deliberate choice. And as we all know in life, every choice has consequences. Our choices can draw us nearer to God or lead us further away from him. Have you examined your choices recently and how they impact your relationship with Jesus? Know this, when God is our priority we can approach all of our other relationships, obligations, and tasks, with confidence that *"he*

*who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 2:9)*

Will you invite God into all areas of your life, and into all areas of our church life, so we can see the transformation Jesus offers us.

## **Reflection Questions**

What do you think it looks like to put God first in your life in a practical way?

During these 21 Days of Prayer how can you prioritize your relationship with God?

What areas of life do you need to surrender to God, in order to seek his will for your life?

## **Prayer**

God, today I am choosing to seek you and to put you first in my life. I surrender all my busyness, all the things that distract me from following you, so that you might have your rightful place in my life.

I thank you that as I do this, you have promised to take care of every detail of my life. I need to trust you in this. I need you to stretch my faith. So, I surrender all my plans to you so I can make room in my life for your plans and for your path for my life. Have your own way with me, O Lord, and with our congregation. Amen.

## DAY 3 – SEPTEMBER 9th

### WALKING HUMBLY

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#### Micah 6:8 (NIV)

*"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God".*

#### First Peter 5:5-6 (NLT)

*And all of you, dress yourselves in humility as you relate to one another, for  
"God opposes the proud  
but gives grace to the humble."  
<sup>6</sup> So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right  
time he will lift you up in honor.*

#### Philippians 2:5-8 (NLT)

<sup>5</sup> *You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.*  
<sup>6</sup> *Though he was God,  
he did not think of equality with God  
as something to cling to.*  
<sup>7</sup> *Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;  
he took the humble position of a slave  
and was born as a human being.*  
*When he appeared in human form,*  
<sup>8</sup> *he humbled himself in obedience to God  
and died a criminal's death on a cross.*

### Meditation

Many people seem to have a problem with humility. Pride is much more the spirit of our age. However, Scripture is clear that as Christians we are to walk and live in humility.

Humility is not about thinking less of yourself, but it is about thinking about yourself less. (You may want to read that sentence again).



This is a counter intuitive thought in our day and age when we can be so absorbed with OUR achievements, dreams, desires, and worries. Perhaps it is because we feel that we need to promote ourselves to stay relevant, to receive credit for our achievements, or even to reach our purpose in life, at least as we understand it.

However, the Bible instructs us as followers of Christ to model ourselves on the life of Jesus by cultivating a humble obedience to God. To ask the Holy Spirit to make us more self-aware, and to fight the temptation to be proud in a way that diminishes others.

Jesus is our example here. *"Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to."* We learn to be humble as we magnify God and allow him to be God in our lives and in our congregation. This calls on us to surrender "our plans" to him and to seek and trust His plans which Scripture says are better than any of ours. It is in this act of surrender that we find grace, peace, and forgiveness in our own lives.

### Reflection Questions

- Reflect deeply. What are you most proud of? For each of the things you list, do they draw you closer to God, or do they lead you further away from him?
- What does "humbling yourself" in God's sight look like to you?
- What is ONE thing you can do today, to submit to God by walking in humility?

## **Prayer**

Lord, I repent of the times and the way when I have walked in pride instead of in humility. I repent of the times when I have been self-centered and brushed You aside. I thank you for the example of Jesus who reminds me that servanthood means obedience to you, and trust in you.

I pray that as I humble myself before you this day you would show me your grace and favour. May you be magnified in my life as I submit myself to you. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.

## **Other Reflections**

## DAY 4 – SEPTEMBER 10th

### PURIFY MY HEART

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#### Psalm 51:10 (NLT)

*"Create in me a clean heart, O God.  
Renew a loyal spirit within me."*

#### Proverbs 16:2 (NLT)

*"People may be pure in their own eyes,  
but the Lord examines their motives."*

#### Philippians 2:3 (NIV)

*"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves."*

### Meditation

We become transformed in Christ as our hearts and motives are purified (that is, as we have the "contaminants" removed).

Now we must be very careful here and not fall into the trap of believing that we have to fix all of our "issues", and become perfect, before we can approach our holy God. As the John Bell prayer song requests of God,

*"Take O take me as I am.  
Summon out what I shall be.  
Set your seal upon my heart  
and live in me."*

I am sure we have all had times when we have let our guilt, our shame, our sense of failure, get in the way of building our relationship with God. The truth is that our God is a God of grace, mercy, and compassion. He accepts us as we are. We can bring all our brokenness and humanity to him. The encounters Jesus had with people in the New Testament reveals this truth of this.

We will all fall short of perfection. As Scripture reminds is, *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus"* (Romans 3:23-24).

Thank you Jesus! And thank you that the Christian life is about progression not perfection. The real question is, am I more like Jesus today than I was yesterday?

It is important to remember that God blesses who we are, not who we pretend to be. We don't need to wear our "masks" when we are around him. We can be genuine before him. His desire is to have a relationship with us through Jesus, and he will restore us through his love, mercy, and with that amazing grace we so often sing about. And that brings us to repentance. We need to repent (turn away) from our sins when we miss the mark in our thinking, speaking, and doing, accepting both forgiveness and correction from the Lord.

Ask yourself today. "Lord, what areas of my life, my heart, my motives, do I have to surrender to you today and invite you to purify so I can reflect your likeness more and more."

### **Reflection Questions**

Read today's Scriptures again. What is God saying to you today about your heart posture and motives?

What areas of your life have you tried to fix on your own but you realize you need to just hand them over to Jesus so he can help you?

What would it look like for you to be transformed during these *21 Days of Prayer* to be more like Christ? What are your greatest spiritual needs?

## **Prayer**

Lord, I thank you for your grace and mercy.

I thank you for your goodness, mercy and love.

I thank you that you have promised you will never leave me or forsake me.

I pray that you would illuminate the areas of my life, and my motives, which are not pure so I may bring them before you in confession and repentance.

I know that I often miss the mark and so I ask for your guidance and wisdom as I repent of those thoughts and actions.

Speak to me today! Renew my heart, restore my motives, and transform me for your glory. Amen.

*Lord,  
"Take O take me as I am.  
Summon out what I shall be.  
Set your seal upon my heart  
and live in me."*

## **Other Reflections**

## DAY 5 – SEPTEMBER 11th

### TAME MY TONGUE

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#### Psalm 39:1-2 (NLT)

*"I said to myself, 'I will watch what I do  
and not sin in what I say.*

*I will hold my tongue  
when the ungodly are around me."  
<sup>2</sup> But as I stood there in silence—  
not even speaking of good things—  
the turmoil within me grew worse".*

#### Ephesians 4:29 (NLT)

*"Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and  
helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear  
them."*

#### James 3:7-10 (Msg)

*"<sup>7-10</sup> This is scary: You can tame a tiger, but you can't tame a tongue—it's  
never been done. The tongue runs wild, a wanton killer. With our tongues  
we bless God our Father; with the same tongues we curse the very men and  
women he made in his image. Curses and blessings out of the same mouth!"*

### Meditation

Our words are powerful. They have the power to heal or hurt, to encourage or discourage, to build someone up or to tear someone down, to share faith or to generate fear. In fact, our words have the power to dictate and influence so many things in life, in our life and in the lives of others.

Our words are also alive. Once they are spoken they take on a life of their own. We can retract them, or apologize for what we said, but we can't take them back. They continue to live. In the social media world in which we live, our words live on long after they were originally written. Words need to be used carefully. As someone once said, *"God gave us two ears and one mouth so we would listen twice as often as we speak!"*

Proverbs 18:21 (Msg) reminds us that *"Words kill, words give life; they're either poison or fruit—you choose."* We all know from our own experience the blessings of someone praising us, and the distress of someone gossiping about us. No wonder James, the brother of Jesus, reminded us that although the tongue is small, it is very difficult to control.

When we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, the Holy Spirit comes and lives within us to help guide us on our journey of faith, and to remind us that we are now new creation in Christ. Second Corinthians 5:17-18 puts it this way. *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."*

We need, therefore, to draw on the power of the Spirit so that our words reflect the love, patience, goodness, kindness and self-control of Christ. We should all ask ourselves regularly,

"Do my words bring glory to God or do they do something else?"

"Do my words reflect my Christian love for others, or do they declare something else?"

Imagine the impact you can make to represent Christ when you allow the Holy Spirit to dictate your speech.

## **Reflective Questions**

What is God saying to you about controlling your tongue?

Do you think your daily speech reflects the values that Jesus had, or something else?

How can you use your speech to influence those around you in a positive way for Jesus?

### **Prayer**

Lord, today I surrender not only my heart and mind to you, but also my mouth.

I ask forgiveness for all those times when I have spoken in ways that have not honoured Jesus or have hurt others.

I pray that you would increase my understanding of the power of my words and so give me wisdom to speak in a way that is pleasing to you.

Let me be known for words of love, kindness, mercy and grace. Amen.

*Speak, Lord, in the stillness, speak your word to me:*

*Hushed my heart to listen in expectancy.*

*Speak, your servant listens, be not silent, Lord:*

*Let me know your presence; let your voice be heard"*

(Hymn #442. Words: Emily M. Crawford (1868-1927))

### **Other Reflections**



## DAY 6 – SEPTEMBER 12th

### TRANSFORM MY MIND

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#### **Romans 12:2 (NIV)**

*"Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

#### **Second Corinthians 10:5 (GNB)**

*"We pull down every proud obstacle that is raised against the knowledge of God; we take every thought captive and make it obey Christ"*

#### **Philippians 4:8 (NLT)**

*"And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise."*

### **Meditation**

It is a key teaching of Scripture that our minds are only transformed when we surrender our lives to God and begin to mature in our Christian faith.

We all experience thoughts, situations, and events in life that challenge and stretch us. This is true from birth to death.

We also live in a time when we are constantly bombarded by information, so much so that most of us experience "information overload" every day and have a feeling of being left behind as the world moves on at a rapid pace.

As we live out our Christian lives we experience not only good and pure thoughts, but misinformation, half-truths, and outright lies. All of these, good and bad, have the power to shape what we think and to influence our behaviour.

The old advertisement said that *"You are what you eat"*. But we also are what we read, and what we watch. We are influenced by who we hang out with, and by what we experience.

No wonder the Scriptures urge us to make sure that we have the mind of Christ within us, so we can be influenced by HIS thoughts and live in HIS way.

As we seek the guidance of the Spirit, and the direction of Scripture, we learn to discern truth from lies, and good thoughts from destructive ones, and we start to redirect our thinking to the things of God. For example, when someone puts us down we think not of their opinion, but of what God says about us, that we are, above all else, his precious child.

Yes, we live in a noisy world that tries to get us to conform to its viewpoint, but Scripture reminds us to fix our thoughts on Jesus and to be guided by what he requires of us.

This discernment is not always easy. It is hard work. But we do not work alone. The Holy Spirit will guide us when we are open to embracing what God wants to do in our lives. The questions we all need to ask ourselves is this,

*"Am I more like Christ today than I was yesterday, than I was five years ago, that I was when I first became a Christian?"*

*If not, why not?"*

### **Reflection Questions**

Think about your life as a Christian. What signs do you see that you have been progressing in the faith and becoming more Christ like?

What areas of your thought-life do you still need to surrender to God?

What are some of the challenges you face in "letting go and letting God"?

## Prayer

Lord, search me and know my thoughts. I surrender myself to you anew.

I recognize that my thoughts are not your thoughts, and my ways are not your ways, but I want them to be.

And so, I invite you into my heart and mind today that you would change me, renew me, and transform me.

May the mind of Christ be in me that I might live to your glory. Amen.

*"May the mind of Christ my Saviour live in me from day to day,  
Jesus' love and power controlling all I do and say."*

*"May I run the race before me, strong and brave to face the foe,  
Looking only unto Jesus as I onward go."*

(Hymn 644. Words: Katie b. Williams (1859-1928))

## Other Reflections

## DAY 7 – SEPTEMBER 13th

### WORSHIP

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#### Psalm 29:2 (NIV)

*"Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the  
splendor of his holiness"*

#### Psalm 89:15 (NLT)

*"Happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship, for they will walk in  
the light of your presence, Lord."*

#### Psalm 95:6 (NLT)

*"Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our  
maker"*

#### Psalm 100:2 (NLT)

*"Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy."*

### Meditation

"Living Faith", one of the subordinate standards of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. It says this about worship.

7.3.1. *The church lives to praise God.*

*We have no higher calling  
than to offer the worship that belongs to God  
day by day, Sunday by Sunday.*

It then reminds us of some of the elements of our worship.

7.3.2. *Through the preaching of the Word*

*and the celebration of the Sacraments,  
in praise, prayer, teaching and fellowship,  
God sustains the life of the church.*

*We worship God as Lord  
offering ourselves in the service of Christ,  
rejoicing that we have been brought from darkness to light.*

Then it speaks of the deeper meaning of worship.

*7.3.3. Worship draws us into the work of Christ.*

*Even now he intercedes for the world  
to which he came and for which he died.  
In union with him, the church prays  
for the healing and salvation of the world*

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And this particular section on the meaning of Worship ends, as it should, by giving God the glory.

*7.3.4. Blessing and honour and glory and power  
be to our God for ever and ever!*

Worship is more than going to church on a Sunday morning. It is an “attitude of the heart”. As we move through each day of our lives it should be with an attitude of worship, giving thanks to God, joining with Jesus in prayer, and understanding that our acts of love, kindness, and mercy towards others are also acts of our worship.

## **Reflection Questions**

Read those statements about worship again. Is there any particular phrase that stood out for you? Why was that?

How important has worship been for the development of your faith?  
in what ways?

Read again today's Scripture verses. Do they suggest that worship is a  
"passive" activity or an "active" activity?

### **Prayer**

This famous prayer by Richard of Chichester (1197-1253) is a prayer that  
expresses our deep devotion to Christ. Today, let it be our prayer.

*"Thanks be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have  
given me, for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.*

*O most merciful Redeemer, friend, and brother,*

*may I know you more clearly,*

*love you more dearly,*

*and follow you more nearly, day by day."*

*Amen.*

### **Other Reflections**

## DAY 8 – SEPTEMBER 14th

### TEACH ME TO LOVE

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#### First John 4:7-10 (NLT)

*"<sup>7</sup> Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

*<sup>9</sup> God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. <sup>10</sup> This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins".*

#### John 13:35 (NLT)

*"Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."*

#### First Corinthians 13:4-8 (NLT)

*" Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. <sup>6</sup> It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. <sup>7</sup> Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.*

*<sup>8</sup> Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever!"*

### Meditation

Someone once wrote that as Christians *"We never stop learning how to receive and extend God's love"*. That is certainly true. Love is part of our discipleship.

But it is also true that the commandments to *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind"* and *"Love your neighbour as yourself"* can become so routine to us that we just give lip service to them, instead of applying them in practical ways every day. Even Jesus warned us in Matthew 24:12 that love can grow *"cold"*.

However, these two “greatest” commandments are the core values of our faith, and we must take them seriously because Scripture is very clear that it is by our love that others will know that we are Jesus disciples.

Of course, we are only able to extend love when we ourselves have received it from God. The briefest description of God in the Bible is the simple statement that “*God is love*”. Since God is love, and we are loved by him, we are to be the bearers of that love to others. We do that through our words but mostly through our actions. Love is communicated by our actions. Jesus is our model. John 3:16 says, “*For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life*”.

As we grow in our relationship with Jesus, we grow deeper in love with him, and out of the depths of that love we find ourselves able to share it with others in both word and action.

### Reflection Questions

Read the first Scripture lesson through again several times. What phrase grabbed your attention. Why was that? Spend some time pondering what it means.

Jesus said that our love for one another (fellow believers) will “*prove to the world that you are my disciples*.” In what ways do you show your love to other members of our congregation. Think of someone in our congregation you can bless this week through a random act of kindness. Do it!

Read through the third Scripture passage again. Where is your love failing? Bring those areas before God in prayer and ask him to help you to be more loving in those areas.



## Prayer

Lord Jesus, I once was lost but now I'm found.

Your love found me.

Your love transforms me.

Grant me today a new understanding of your love.

Thank you for demonstrating how much you loved me by sending your Son to die for me so that my sins might be forgiven.

May your love transform me, so that I might see myself the way you see me and learn to love myself as you love me.

Help me to see those around me with the eyes of love that I might love them more.

I commit myself to put your love into practice in our church, in our community, and in the world. Amen.

*"All the way my Saviour leads me; oh the fullness of his love!*

*Perfect rest to me is promised in my Father's house above.*

*When my spirit, clothed immortal, wings its flight to realms of day,*

*This my song through endless ages, "Jesus led me all the way".*

(Hymn 699 Words: Fanny J. Crosby (1820-1915))

## Other Reflections

## DAY 9 – SEPTEMBER 15th

### THE SPIRIT OF REVIVAL

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**Ezekiel 37:1-10, 13-14 (NLT)**

*"The Lord took hold of me, and I was carried away by the Spirit of the Lord to a valley filled with bones. <sup>2</sup> He led me all around among the bones that covered the valley floor. They were scattered everywhere across the ground and were completely dried out. <sup>3</sup> Then he asked me, "Son of man, can these bones become living people again?"*

*"O Sovereign Lord," I replied, "you alone know the answer to that."*

*<sup>4</sup> Then he said to me, "Speak a prophetic message to these bones and say, 'Dry bones, listen to the word of the Lord! <sup>5</sup> This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Look! I am going to put breath into you and make you live again! <sup>6</sup> I will put flesh and muscles on you and cover you with skin. I will put breath into you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.'"*

*<sup>7</sup> So I spoke this message, just as he told me. Suddenly as I spoke, there was a rattling noise all across the valley. The bones of each body came together and attached themselves as complete skeletons. <sup>8</sup> Then as I watched, muscles and flesh formed over the bones. Then skin formed to cover their bodies, but they still had no breath in them.*

*<sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, "Speak a prophetic message to the winds, son of man. Speak a prophetic message and say, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, O breath, from the four winds! Breathe into these dead bodies so they may live again.'"*

*<sup>10</sup> So I spoke the message as he commanded me, and breath came into their bodies. They all came to life and stood up on their feet—a great army....*

*<sup>13</sup> When this happens, O my people, you will know that I am the Lord. <sup>14</sup> I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live again and return home to your own land. Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken, and I have done what I said. Yes, the Lord has spoken!"*

## Meditation

In their original context these words were directed at the people of Israel in their hopelessness and despair as they languished in exile Babylon. Today we might relate them to the situation of the Christian church in Canada, and even to how we reflect on our own congregation.

Hopelessness and despair, whether we experience them in our own personal lives, or in our life as a congregation, sucks the life and vitality from us. We wonder how all this came about. We struggle to understand. We wonder why God let this happen. In our congregational life we wonder if there can be a new and vital life again or should we just face the facts and accept, in time, an inevitable death.

The above Scripture reading is a story of hope. It goes like this.

*Listen to the word of the Lord God.*

*I am going to make you live again.*

*Come breathe of life and give life again.*

*I will put my Spirit in you.*

*The Lord has spoken!*

Personal and congregational renewal always start when we listen to, and for, the Word of God. That means we need to make every effort to be a people who know the Scriptures and who listen to God. It means we need to be obedient to God's Word and to trust him, even when the way ahead seems difficult or hopeless.

We also need to pray for renewal and for revival. God answers our prayers. We have to work and serve to create the conditions where the Holy Spirit can be most effective, knowing that renewal and revival is not our work but a work of God.

Today let us claim for ourselves, and for our congregation, this word from the Lord. "*I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live again...*" (Ezekiel 37:14), and let us always remember that we are a resurrection people!

## **Questions for Reflection**

As you read today's Scripture which parts filled you with hope? Why?

Reflect on your own spiritual practices such as your Bible reading practices, your prayer life, your financial support of the church's ministry, your participation in worship (in person or on line), your willingness to be involved in a ministry. What is God revealing to you?

What would "renewal" look like for our congregation? Pray for the Spirit to give you insight.

## **Prayer**

Life Giving Spirit, sometimes we are weary, and often it is because we rely on our own strength and not on yours. We think we are wise when we are really foolish. We make plans but often we do not seek your input, or we pray and ask God to bless what we already decided without him.

Forgive us, O God, when we do not draw near to you first. When we forget our plans are not necessarily your plans, and our ways are not automatically your ways. Make us sensitive to the leading and direction of your Spirit.

Jesus, Resurrected One, Lord of the Church, hear our prayers for the renewal of our congregation, and grant us insight into your plans for us, as we reason together. Amen.

## DAY 10 – SEPTEMBER 16th

### DIVINE DIRECTION

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#### Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT)

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart;  
do not depend on your own understanding.  
Seek his will in all you do,  
and he will show you which path to take."*

#### Psalms 32:8 (NLT)

*"The Lord says, 'I will guide you along the best pathway for your life.  
I will advise you and watch over you.'"*

#### John 16:13 (Msg)

*"When the Holy Spirit, who is truth, comes, he shall guide you into all truth,  
for he will not be presenting his own ideas, but will be passing on to you  
what he has heard. He will tell you about the future".*

### Meditation

Imagine going on a car journey. You are the driver and the navigator. The route to your destination is an unfamiliar one. So you opened a map, or more likely you entered your destination in your GPS (Global Positioning Satellite), trusting the technology to get you there without becoming lost.

We all know the importance of good directions. We all know the embarrassment of getting lost. We have all experienced the confusion of trying to get back on the right path.

In today's Scriptures God promises to *"show (us) which path to take."* More than that, he promises to guide us *"along the best pathway for your life"*. Jesus said that he gave us his Spirit to *"guide (us) into all truth"*. Those are powerful promises.

We find God's pathway laid out for us in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. We are meant to seek God's direction by seeking it out in His Word. As all Scripture is *"God breathed"* (or *"inspired"*) (Second Timothy 3:16), knowing the Word is to know God's voice. The more we know God's

voice, the more clarity we have about what direction our own life, and the life of our congregation, should go in.

The more we study Scripture the more we understand that God's plans for us are good plans.

### **Reflection Questions**

Where do you need God's direction and guidance at this present time in your life?

How do you hear from God? List the ways. If you are not hearing from God, why not?

How can you create intentional time in your day to spend with God, or increase the time you presently spend with him?

### **Prayer**

Lord, I acknowledge that you are Lord of my life.

I thank you for the divine direction that is available to me.

Today, I confess that I have often pursued my own ways over yours. Forgive me. Show me the way you would have me go and guide my steps.

Guide our congregation as we seek to follow you faithfully, and help us to walk in faith, reading to follow wherever you lead. Amen.

## DAY 11 – SEPTEMBER 17th

### GOD PROVIDES

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#### Philippians 4:19 (NIV)

*"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus."*

#### Matthew 6:25-26 (NLT)

*"That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are?"*

#### 2 Corinthians 9:8 (NIV)

*"And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."*

### Meditation

In my experience most people were not born with a "silver spoon" in their mouth. The vast majority of people I know have had times of great need and times when their needs have been met. They have worked hard, and sacrificed greatly, to get where they now are.

Our needs, of course, are never the same from one person to another, and they change from time to time. For years my greatest need was to make my mortgage payments. I remember the relief when it was finally discharged. When I suffered my two heart attacks in 2008 and 2011, my need was for restored health and to cultivate a healthier lifestyle. Presently, my greatest need, as I perceive it, is to grow deeper into my relationship with God, partly because I sense God isn't finished with me yet!

God tells us in today's Scripture verses that he always operates out of a place of abundance. There is no need He cannot meet. He reminds us, as well, of how precious we are to him.

Of course, there is a vast difference between what we "need" and what we "want". Sometimes I "want" things that are not good for me, and "need" things

only because I am envious of others. At other times, our “needs” are profound and real. To feed my family is a practical need. To receive forgiveness and mercy is a spiritual need. I’m sure as you’ve read this you have thought about some of your own personal needs and what Jesus promise means to you.

The main point of all these verses simply is that God is our Source of blessing, and because he loves us, we can learn to trust him. In Philippians 4:11-13, the apostle Paul wrote these profound words.

*“...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”*

“Being content in any and every situation” is certainly not easy. Trust is not always easy. Waiting for God to act is often difficult because his timetable is rarely our timetable and most of us, quite honestly, are not that patient. Our “instant” society means we tend to approach life with the expectation of a quick resolution to every situation we face. “Letting go and letting God” is surely an act of faith, but for many of us it is a bridge too far.

That’s why every night before I go to bed I spend a few minutes to review my day and to count my blessings. I encourage you to do the same. You will probably be surprised at how much God has blessed you, and how many of your needs he has met.

## **Reflection Questions**

What are your “needs” right now (practical, emotional, spiritual etc.)? Name them before God. Ask him to meet them.

Quickly review your life and count your blessings. Thank God for them.



Read today's first Scripture verse from Philippians 4:19. Read it slowly and ponder each phrase and then, as the Spirit leads you, make it your prayer.

## **Prayer**

Abundant God, the whole earth is full of your glory. I thank you for the beauty and wonder of all you have created. Fresh water. Seas teeming with all kinds of creatures. The cattle on a thousand hills. Vast fields of grain.

I pray for those we call "the needy". The homeless. Those who live under the poverty line. Those who experience food insecurity. Yet our country of abundance is not abundant for many. Where I can, in whatever way I can, may I share the blessings I have received with others.

Lord you know my personal needs better than I know myself, for you are my Creator. I trust you as my Provider for I know that you are a generous Father who keeps his promises. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.

## **Other Reflections**

## DAY 12 – SEPTEMBER 18<sup>th</sup>

### TRUST AND OBEY

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#### Jeremiah 7:23 (NLT)

*"This is what I told them: 'Obey me, and I will be your God, and you will be my people. Do everything as I say, and all will be well!'"*

#### John 14:21 (NLT)

*"Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them."*

#### First John 2:3-6

*"And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. <sup>4</sup> If someone claims, 'I know God,' but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. <sup>5</sup> But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. <sup>6</sup> Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did."*

### Meditation

How do we express our love for God? How do we show him that we trust him? The simple answer, is that we learn to obey him. Obedience is not easy. Jesus never said it was. What he did say was that obedience is an act of love for him.

We have all had times, even as Christians, when we have done our "own" thing, even when we have known that God has other plans. We have all had times when we have prioritized the wrong things and have not listened to Jesus in Matthew 6:33 when he tells us to *"Seek first the Kingdom of God."* We have all had times when we have chosen the easiest way rather than the more difficult path of discipleship. That doesn't make us terrible people, it just reflects our humanity and the power of sin.

In John 14:21 Jesus says, *"Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me."* As we learn to obey God's commands we draw nearer to him. Our relationship with him grows. We willingly submit

ourselves to his purposes and plans. In doing so we submit our human desires to his holy desires. We create space for the Holy Spirit to move in our lives. And the more we do that, the easier it is to be obedient to him.

The old hymn put it this way,

1 When we walk with the Lord  
in the light of his word,  
what a glory he sheds on our way!  
While we do his good will,  
he abides with us still,  
and with all who will trust and obey.

Refrain

Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

4 Then in fellowship sweet  
we will sit at his feet,  
or we'll walk by his side in the way;  
what he says we will do,  
where he sends we will go;  
never fear, only trust and obey. [Refrain]

### **Reflection Questions**

How can you demonstrate your love for God today?

In what areas of your life is it difficult for you to be obedience to God?

Name one thing you can change so you are more obedient to God.

**Prayer**

Lord, I thank you that you all all-knowing and always have my best interests at heart. And, so, I confess my disobedience, and my distrust, and my doubts. I lay aside my own preferences, plans, and schemes. I recommit myself to trusting in your Word and walking in your ways. Holy Spirit draw me nearer to Jesus that I would willingly trust and obey him. Amen.

**Other Reflections**

## DAY 13 – SEPTEMBER 19<sup>th</sup>

### GOD'S PROTECTION

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#### Psalm 91:1-2 (NLT)

*"Those who live in the shelter of the Most High  
will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.*

*<sup>2</sup> This I declare about the Lord:  
He alone is my refuge, my place of safety;  
he is my God, and I trust him."*

#### Psalm 32:7 (NLT)

*"For you are my hiding place;  
you protect me from trouble.  
You surround me with songs of victory".*

#### Psalm 46:1-2 (NLT)

*"God is our refuge and strength,  
always ready to help in times of trouble.  
<sup>2</sup> So we will not fear when earthquakes come  
and the mountains crumble into the sea".*

### Meditation

We live insecure lives in an insecure world. We all need to feel safe and secure. It is a basic human need.

Some of us need security in our identities, or calling, or relationships. Some of us may need physical protection from harm. Our area of insecurity may be in our health, in our finances, in our relationship with God.

That's why it is important for us to know that God is *"my refuge and place of my safety"*, as Psalm 92:2 puts it. That we can find shelter in him. That he is our *"hiding place"* and our protector as Psalm 32 affirms. That he is *"our refuge and strength"* in the tough times of our lives and that he is *"always ready to help in times of trouble"* as Psalm 46 proclaims.

In life we often see and experience suffering that is beyond our understanding. It is clear to see that we live in a broken world where there are often more questions than answers. Today's Scripture verses assure us that when the

storms of life come, we are safe in the arms of Jesus. He will uphold us and give us comfort and peace. That's why the apostle Paul reminded us in Romans 8:39 that, *"No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Will you embrace that promise today?

## Reflection Questions

What areas of your life make you feel most vulnerable?

When you feel that way do you turn to God and his Word or seek protection and security somewhere else?

Think of someone you know who is struggling right now? Find a way to reach out to them and assure them that God cares for them (Pray for them, write them an encouraging note, take them out for dinner, go and visit them etc.)

## Prayer

Lord, today I thank you for your unconditional love and protection. I ask that amid the trials and tribulations of my life and this world, I would never forget that you have the ultimate authority and power in this world, and that your promises have stood the test of time. I pray, then, the words of the old hymn and I make these words my own.

*Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah\*, [\*Redeemer]  
Pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,  
Hold me with Thy powerful hand.  
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,  
Feed me till I want no more;  
Feed me till I want no more.*

In Jesus Name, I pray. Amen.

## DAY 14 – SEPTEMBER 20th

### GOD'S FAVOUR

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#### Psalm 5:12 (NLT)

*"For you bless the godly, O Lord;  
you surround them with your shield of love."*

#### Psalm 30:5 (NLT)

*"For his anger lasts only a moment,  
but his favor lasts a lifetime!  
Weeping may last through the night,  
but joy comes with the morning".*

#### Proverbs 8:35

*"For whoever finds me finds life  
and receives favor from the Lord."*

### Meditation

Sometimes we forget who we are as Christians. Recently an old camp song came into my mind where the first verse says,

*"If anyone asks you who I am, who I am, who I am.*

*If anyone asks you who I am, tell them I'm a child of God!"*

Have you ever found yourself admiring someone and wishing that you were as kind as them, or as loving as them? Have you ever looked at a fellow Christian and wished that you were as faithful as them, or as gifted as them. Have you ever looked at someone and decided that God must love them or care about them more than he loves or cares about you?

Listen up. When you are a child of God, when you have given your life to Jesus, 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, *"anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"* The Bible uses different words for that relationship. Today's Scriptures talk about us being *"godly,"* about us receiving God's *"favour"*.

When we read the gospels we are promised that when we receive salvation through accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour we enter into a right relationship

with God. We are set free from our sin. We inherit eternal life. We have access to God's favor in our lives, not only in this life, but also in the life to come. So if anyone asks you who you are. Be bold. Witness to Jesus. Tell them you are a child of God.

### **Reflection Questions**

List some of the ways you have seen God's favour in your life.

What does being a Christian mean to you?

Take a few moments in prayer to re-commit yourself to Jesus and to making a difference in our world for him (or make that personal commitment now if you have never done so and be sure to speak to our minister so he can support you in your decision to follow Jesus)

### **Prayer**

Lord, I am so grateful that I am your child. That indeed you call me your friend. I am so grateful for the gift of salvation given to me through Jesus, and for the ways in which your Spirit pours your favour into me life. Thank you for every blessing you have given me. Thank you for every opportunity I have to show your love to others. Equip me I pray as I do what you have called me to do. I rededicate my life to you. Transform me as I seek your face. Amen.

### **Other Reflections**



## DAY 15 – SEPTEMBER 21st

### UNITY IN CHRIST

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#### 1 Corinthians 1:10 (NLT)

*"I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose."*

#### Colossians 3:13-14 (NLT)

*"Make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. <sup>14</sup> Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony".*

#### Psalms 133:1 (NLT)

*"How wonderful and pleasant it is  
when brothers live together in harmony!"*

### Meditation

To quote the well-known phrase. "We are better together". We are stronger together. We are more effective together. There is a lot of truth in those statements.

I'm sure that we have all experienced situations in our lives that seemed impossible to conquer on our own, but we were able to conquer it with the support, encouragement, and help of others.

The same is true in church life. We have a greater impact in our communities when we partner together. The Wasaga Beach Ministerial Foodbank is a wonderful example of that. We are more effective internationally when churches partner together, for example through Presbyterians Sharing where over 700 congregations pool their resources, so we can do together what no single congregation can do alone.

The Bible is clear that we are more effective and powerful when we come together. When we are *"of one mind, united in thought and purpose."* When we live and work together in *"harmony"*.

Although our perspectives may differ, and our backgrounds may vary, and our theological beliefs may differ at points, it is still true that there is more to unite us than to divide us. Why? Because Jesus Christ is Lord of us all. He is the King and Head of the Church. He died for the sins of all of us. He calls us all into the same discipleship making mission and he binds us together in love.

Today we pray for the unity of the Christian Church. We pray for the unity of our congregation as we revision and reimagine our future together. Together we are stronger, better, more effective ambassadors of Christ.

### **Reflection Questions**

How is God calling you to serve him within and through our congregation?

What personal preferences are you willing to lay aside in pursuit of unity within the Church at large and within our congregation?

Is there anyone in our congregation you have fallen out with or harbor negative thoughts about? Pray, reach out to that person, talk, and be reconciled to them.

### **Prayer**

God, I thank you that you call Christians into a relationship not only with you but with each other. I pray against any division within my relationships and within our Church, the Body of Christ. I ask forgiveness for those times I have created division among my family, friends, in the workplace, the community, or within our congregation. By your Spirit may I seek the peace and unity of Christ in all I do. Amen.

## DAY 16 – SEPTEMBER 22nd

### THE WORD OF GOD

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#### Psalm 119:105 (NLT)

*"Your word is a lamp to guide my feet  
and a light for my path."*

#### Hebrews 4:12 (NLT)

*"For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires".*

#### John 1:14 (NLT)

*"So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness, and we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son."*

### Meditation

God's written Word is foundational to our faith. The Psalmist says it is *"a lamp to guide our feet"*, *"a light for our path"* throughout life. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that although it may be written down, it is brought alive through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is *"alive"*. It isn't static or dead. It is *"powerful"*. It is filled with the commands, promises, and assurances of our God. It strips away all of our pretence. It reveals *"our innermost thoughts and desires"*. In other words, there is nothing we can hide from God.

Secular philosophies come and go, political pundits fade into obscurity, society changes, but First Peter 1:25 reminds us that, *"the Word of the Lord remains forever"*. That should be good news to us because it gives us a sure and certain anchor in the storms of life.

God's Word is unlike any other word. It speaks from "outside" of time and space with a truth we can rely on. It can give our current situations a different context by helping us understand the nature and character of our God. It can comfort us in sorrow, give us hope when despair sets in, show us the way to forgiveness when we can't forgive ourselves, shine light into the darkness of

world events, and assure us that we are simply pilgrims of God moving through this life to our eternal home.

And, of course, in Jesus Christ, the Word became flesh and lived among us. This is the ultimate expression of the Word being "*alive*", while the Resurrection is proof that the eternal Word still lives.

Let us, then, be people of the Word, reading it every day, praying it, claiming its promises, heeding its warnings, letting us guide us through life. But, again, we do none of this alone. The Holy Spirit is tasked with helping us pursue a deeper knowledge and understanding as well as teaching us how to apply God's Word in our daily lives. Come Holy Spirit, come!

### **Reflection Questions**

Do you read your Bible daily? Why? Why not? What does your answer tell you about your priorities?

Is there a promise in Scripture that you need to claim for yourself or for another person today. What is that promise?

How can our congregation help you to understand and apply God's Word? Write it down here. Tell our minister or one of our elders so we can find the resources that might help you.

### **Prayer**

Lord, I thank you for your Word. I thank you for the hope that I find within its pages. I thank you that it speaks into my present situation. Forgive me when I have not made your Word a priority in my life. I confess that often this causes me to lose sight of your promises and goodness. I know that reading your Word helps me to understand who you are and how much you care for me. Thank you for Jesus, the Living Word, for all that you have done, and do, for me. Amen.

## DAY 17 – SEPTEMBER 23rd

### HAVING A CLEAR VISION

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#### **Habakkuk 2:2-3 (NLT)**

*"Then the Lord said to me,*

*"Write my answer plainly on tablets,  
so that a runner can carry the correct message to others.*

*<sup>3</sup> This vision is for a future time.*

*It describes the end, and it will be fulfilled.  
If it seems slow in coming, wait patiently,  
for it will surely take place.  
It will not be delayed".*

#### **Matthew 13:16-17 (NLT)**

*"But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. <sup>17</sup> I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but they didn't see it. And they longed to hear what you hear, but they didn't hear it."*

#### **Proverbs 29:18 (NLT)**

*"When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild.  
But whoever obeys the law is joyful".*

### **Meditation**

There is great value in vision. Without vision we can easily lose sight of where we are going in life and find ourselves in a very different place than we imagined. This is true in our personal, professional, and church life. Think of it this way. I read recently of a couple who went overseas and at the airport discovered they had left a bag with their passports in it in the taxi they had taken to the airport. Without passports they couldn't get on their flight. It took a day to track down the taxi. No bag, no passports. They had to contact their own country to have new passports issued. This took time. The man missed an important job interview and was not hired. His wife missed an important medical appointment. Their vision of a "perfect vacation" turned into a "nightmare vacation".

That story illustrates the importance of vision and how quickly it can be snatched away if we are not careful to cultivate and care for it.

Vision is absolute essential for our walk with God. You have to see it before you see it! That's why the writer of Hebrews wrote in Hebrews 11:1. *"Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see"*. We receive vision through prayer and spending time in God's Word. The Bible even tells us to write down our vision and to make it plain. That where there is no vision the people perish.

Our task is to align our planned desires with God's Word, and with God's will for our lives. This means we need to learn to trust God, to move forward obediently. If we are not listening to God and allowing him to refine our vision, then our vision is void. But once we have a clear vision from God we should move forward in pursuit of the things he has spoken.

### **Reflection Questions**

What vision for your life is God birthing in you at this time?

What vision for our congregation is God birthing in you at this time?

Write both of these visions down.

### **Prayer**

Lord, there is your plan and there are my plans. There is your purpose for my life, and there are the goals I pursue. There is your vision for my life, and there is the way I see my life unfolding. I confess that too often I neglect your plans and purposes for me, and too often I do not seek your vision. Help me to obediently go where you lead me. Help me to remember that you are with me on my journey of faith. Holy Spirit, lead and guide me in Jesus name. As I think about and write down my vision, refine my imagination, and align my vision with your will for my life that I may be pleasing to you. Amen.

## DAY 18 – SEPTEMBER 24<sup>th</sup>

### FAITH

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#### HEBREWS 11:1 & 6 (NLT)

*"Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see".*

*"And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him".*

#### Romans 10:17

*"So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ".*

### Meditation

Faith is the standard of our relationship with Jesus! We all have to put our hope or trust in something, or someone, but where we put our "faith" is what matters most.

When we put our faith in Jesus we partner with God in believing what *"we cannot see."* Faith is the *"reality of what we hope for"*. When we accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour we do so on faith! We trust in the Word of God and its testimony about Jesus. We are filled by the Holy Spirit.

Faith becomes the standard of knowing God and seeing him transform our hearts and lives. We don't simply have faith in our own salvation, but we have faith that God is all-powerful, and all-seeing. That he is Lord of all and over all. Every day is a fresh opportunity for us to experience God's faithfulness. As the refrain from the hymn "Great is thy faithfulness puts it,

*Great is thy faithfulness,  
Great is thy faithfulness,  
Morning by morning new mercies I see.  
All I have needed thy hand hast provided;  
Great is thy faithfulness,  
Lord unto me.*

## **Reflection Questions**

Take some time to count your blessings. How has God been faithful in your life?

What areas of your life do you need to ask God to give you more faith right now? Take a few moments in prayer to ask him to do that.

How can you impact someone else's life through your faith?

## **Prayer**

Lord, I thank you that it is through faith in Jesus Christ, your Son, that I am saved from my sin and reconciled to you.

Thank you that through faith I can have hope for the future, both for what I can now see and those things that I cannot yet see.

I confess that there have been times when I have lived not by faith but by sight and have restricted your ability to change and transform my life. Remind me again and again, that nothing is impossible to you. That you go before me and beside me, that you are over me, and under me, and that I am safe in your care.

I pray that as I encounter others day, I might encourage and uplift them as I faithfully live for you. Amen.

## **Other Reflections**



## DAY 19 – SEPTEMBER 25<sup>th</sup>

### REVIVAL

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#### Matthew 9:37-38 (NLT)

*"He said to his disciples, 'The harvest is great, but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup> So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.'"*

#### John 6:44 (NLT)

*"For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up".*

#### Luke 19:10 (NLT)

*"For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost."*

### Meditation

It has been observed that Christianity is always only one generation away from extinction. That means that unless the current generation disciples the next generation and leads them to faith in Jesus, Christianity cannot survive. As Paul writes to the Church in Rome in Romans 10:14,

*"But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?"*

As disciples of Jesus we are called to spread the good news of salvation by leading others to faith in him. This, of course, is not our saving work, but an act of grace and mercy from our God. Jesus said that was his mission *"to seek and to save the lost"* and in the Great Commission he sent us out into the world to continue his work of discipleship. He even gave us his Spirit to empower us to do that.

We are invited to partner with God and to stand in the gap and pray for those who do not know Jesus. We are called to let our light shine in the darkness of this world, so people are drawn to Jesus. We are to be the workers in the harvest. We are to live authentically for Christ and to invite others to experience God's grace and love through their own commitment to Jesus Christ. Revival starts with us!

## **Reflection Questions**

Spend time reflecting on how has God saved you and transformed your life

Write down a list of those people in your life who are lost or far away from Christ. Pray for them every day.

Make a list of people you could invite to come to worship with you.

## **Prayer**

Lord, I thank you that you are a God who cares for the lost and invites them to come to faith in you. Today I pray that you would soften the hearts of those whose hearts are hard set against you. No one is too far from your love to be touched and transformed by you.

I pray for those in my family and friendship circle who do not know you that you would touch and transform them and bring them into a relationship with you.

I also pray that I would represent you well in all that I do, so I might testify to your glory and praise. Revive me that I may be part of bringing revival to others. And revive our congregation and renew us. In Jesus Name. Amen.

## **Other Reflections**

## DAY 20 – SEPTEMBER 26<sup>th</sup>

### SPIRITUAL WARFARE

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#### Ephesians 6:10-12 (NLT)

*"A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places."*

#### 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NLT)

*"We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. <sup>5</sup> We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ".*

#### Isaiah 54:17

*"But in that coming day  
no weapon turned against you will succeed.  
You will silence every voice  
raised up to accuse you.  
These benefits are enjoyed by the servants of the Lord;  
their vindication will come from me.  
I, the Lord, have spoken!"*

### Meditation

Many Christians do not understand that we are fighting real, but unseen, spiritual battles every day. Paul writes to the Ephesians, *"<sup>12</sup> For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places."*

Now, of course, we all fight battles in life. That is to be expected. We live in a broken world. A world that is fallen and impacted greatly by the sins of humanity. But there are often two levels to the battles we face. The practical level of the things we face and experience, and the underlying spiritual forces that are at work behind the scenes.

That is why prayer is so important. It needs to be our first response to the situations we face. We need to pray about everything. Ephesians 6:13-15 gives us this instruction about the spiritual battle we are in. We can pray and ask God to place this armour on us.

*Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. <sup>15</sup> For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. <sup>17</sup> Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup> Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*

We live in the tension of knowing that the victory is ours because Jesus Christ has won that victory for us, even while we are fighting off the attacks of these spiritual forces that oppose us. What we need to do is to claim God's promises, trust and obey Him, and set our minds on doing the will of God.

## **Reflection Questions**

What spiritual battles are you presently fighting in your life?

When you have fought spiritual battles in the past how did you push through them?

Take a moment to pray asking God to grant you victory by keeping you faithful to Jesus.

## DAY 21 – SEPTEMBER 27<sup>th</sup>

### VISION AND RENEWAL

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#### Isaiah 40:31 (NLT)

*"But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint".*

#### Psalm 51:10 (NLT)

*"Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me".*

#### Psalm 85:6 (NLT)

*"Won't you revive us again, so your people can rejoice in you."*

### Meditation

Today marks the end of our "21 Days of Prayer." The end of this specific spiritual journey. Our goal has been for us to draw near to God by inviting him to draw near to us, as he has promised to do. To mark the end of this time of prayer our congregation gathers today for a Re-visioning and Re-Imagining Workshop, to discern where God may be leading us in ministry in these coming months and years.

Second Chronicles 7:14 contains this promise from God,

*"Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land".*

Revival and Renewal are not our work. They are the fruit of obedience to God's Word and faith in Jesus. Psalm 85 asks God to "revive us again" but the end of that same Psalm says,

*"Yes, the Lord pours down his blessings.  
Our land will yield its bountiful harvest.  
<sup>13</sup> Righteousness goes as a herald before him,  
preparing the way for his steps".*

Today we anticipate those blessings to be showered out on our congregation believing that he is preparing the "steps" ahead for us.

## **Reflection Questions**

What are the blessings God has given to our congregation that you are thankful for today?

What do you think the “renewal” of our congregation looks like?

What part you play in the renewal of our congregation. May a list.

## **Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ, King and Head of the Church, I thank you that you have called me to be part of the Body of Christ.

By your Spirit, show me how I may best serve the vision you have given us as a congregation by using the time, talents, and treasures. You have blessed me with.

Bless those who lead our congregation as elders and members of the board of managers, for Marilyn Schneider our Clerk of Session, Dallas Stinson our Board chair, and Elizabeth Gibson our Treasurer.

Uphold our interim moderator Rev. Dr. Mathers as he guides and equips us. Thank you for Ruth Currie as she leads us in the ministry of music each Sunday and for Dave Williams, who is our information technology person.

Lord, revive and renew us. May your Spirit move mightily among us. In Jesus Name we pray. Amen.