

BLOODALE UNITED CHURCH  
SERVING TORONTO-ETOBICOKE SINCE 1958

10<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
August 9, 2020

WE BEGIN



Greeting and Call to Worship

God be with you. **And also with you.**

As we worship today, we remember  
being tossed to and fro by waves of fear and doubt.

**We come to Jesus, who walks with us on troubled waters  
and speaks calming words: "Take heart, it is I; have no fear."**

As we worship today, we remember being blown here and there  
by winds of insecurity, pain and anxiety.

**We come to Jesus, who heals troubled spirits  
and speaks calming words: "Take heart, it is I; have no fear."**

We come to be blessed in worship  
with the gift of God's presence,

**that we might find peace for our anxious hearts  
and meaning for our troubled lives.**



Prayer of Approach

God of grace and glory, great Mystery whose ways are not our  
ways, the irony we face in worship today is that, while still in our  
safe places rather than in our shared sanctuary, you summon us  
beyond our safe places to hear your challenge and respond to  
your invitation to faithful life. Lead us through any and all fears  
to deep trust of your abiding presence, power, and peace. Lift us  
from any and all doubts to stronger faith. Work by your Spirit  
in and through us so we may witness to your purposes and  
passion, for the sake of all your children around this one good  
earth, in in Christ's name, who taught us to pray by using the  
words he taught us, saying: Our Father ...

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn **VU# 218** "We Praise You, O God"  
(below, attached, sung or read as poetry)

Descant

3 With voic - es u - nit - ed,  
1 We praise you, O God, our Re - deem - er, Cre - a - tor,  
2 We wor - ship you, God of our moth - ers and fa - thers,  
3 With voic - es u - nit - ed our prais - es we of - fer

and glad - ly our songs of thanks - giv - ing we raise.  
in grate - ful de - vo - tion our trib - ute we bring.  
through tri - al and tem - pest, com - pan - ion and guide.  
and glad - ly our songs of thanks - giv - ing we raise.

We pray for your bless - ing,  
We lay it be - fore you, we kneel and a - dore you,  
When per - ils o'er - take us, you will not for - sake us,  
Our sins now con - fess - ing, we pray for your bless - ing,

## THE WORD OF GOD



First Reading: Genesis 37: 1-4, 12-28

*Joseph has a dream, and is then sold by his brothers.*

37 Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan.<sup>2</sup> This is the story of the family of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.<sup>3</sup> Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves.<sup>4</sup> But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.<sup>12</sup> Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem.<sup>13</sup> And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "Here I am."<sup>14</sup> So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron. He came to Shechem,<sup>15</sup> and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, "What are you seeking?"<sup>16</sup> "I am seeking my brothers," he said; "tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock."<sup>17</sup> The man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan.<sup>18</sup> They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him.<sup>19</sup> They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer.<sup>20</sup> Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams."<sup>21</sup> But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life."<sup>22</sup> Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father.<sup>23</sup> So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore;<sup>24</sup> and they

Sharing Time for All *(for children/youth if present)*

Speak about your doubt and anxiety with your children as you consider their attendance at a friend's house or at school in September. Share your trust in God with them, which eases your anxiety and also promotes their trust of both you and God.

Hymn VU# 562 "Jesus Calls Us"  
*(below, attached, sung or read as poetry)*

## Jesus Calls Us 562

Words: Cecil Frances Alexander 1852, alt.  
Music: William Herbert Jude 1874

GALILEE  
8 7 8 7

took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

<sup>25</sup> Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. <sup>26</sup> Then Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? <sup>27</sup> Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” And his brothers agreed. <sup>28</sup> When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

This is the witness of Israel.

**Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Reading: Matthew 14: 22-33

*Jesus walks on water, and saves Peter.*



<sup>22</sup> Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. <sup>23</sup> And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, <sup>24</sup> but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. <sup>25</sup> And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. <sup>26</sup> But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. <sup>27</sup> But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

<sup>28</sup> Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” <sup>29</sup> He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” <sup>31</sup> Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” <sup>32</sup> When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. <sup>33</sup> And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

The Gospel of Christ.

**Thanks be to God.**

Sermon *Letting Go of Maintenance for Mission*  
(below, or attached)

Maintenance of the status quo takes a lot of energy. And we do it for lots of reasons. We do it because we rather like the way things are and don't want them to change. We do it because we despair of the possibility that it could be better than it is. We do it because we are made anxious by uncertainty. So we maintain the way things are. We maintain our status and position in the world by “keeping up appearances.” We maintain our desire to have cordial relations with the superpower to the south of us for fear of reprisal. We maintain our leverage in the church for our particular convictions. We maintain the level of our portfolio because its erosion worries us. We maintain our role in the family and among our siblings for the sake of concord. We maintain by resistance to those who would change things. We maintain by writing careful e-mails, keeping our watchful eyes on alert and enabling control of the variables that receive our full attention.

So today we ponder the news from God, the Gospel news that breaks open every status quo and invites us to new God-given gift, demand, and risk. In our readings today, the news that works on our status quo maintenance comes as both a dream and an act of narration.

The Joseph story is told among his many older brothers who had leverage and power arranged in the family the way that they wanted it. Joseph was a younger brother; we would call him a “late surprise” in the family on whom his father Jacob doted. Joseph, in his naivete, shared his dream of pre-eminence with his older brothers, who of course resented him in powerful ways.

His dream of pre-eminence, it turns out in what follows, led to Joseph being elevated to prime minister of Egypt so that he could provide food to save his brothers from a severe famine. It turns out, also, that what he and the narrator came to understand is that

all of this was God's intention from the beginning. It was a very big dream that was to be lived out to the advantage of the entire family. But of course none of them knew that at the time, so the brothers resented him.

As a kid, his father sent him out to check on his brothers who were at work in the field. He didn't work like they did, for he was too young. When he appeared in the field where they were hot and tired, they said to each other, "*Let's kill this dreamer.*" For the kid upset the pattern of privilege in the family. So the brothers became dream-killers who acted in the interest of the status quo, of the maintenance of their privilege. But they didn't kill Joseph; they simply sold him into slavery.

And of course we can never read this story without thinking of Martin Luther King Jr. and his "I Have A Dream" speech. Martin's dream was of freedom and justice, one that pulsed with deep faith and aligned with national patriotism. But the dream had to be killed by the killing of the dreamer, according to the powerful maintainers of the status quo. Except that, when the dream comes from God, as it did with Joseph and with Martin, and as it still does with the Black Lives Matter movement, you can't kill the dream. Sure, you can kill the dreamer, but you can't kill the dream, for the dream persists, and insists on having its say every time another black man like George Floyd gets brutally and unjustly killed.

In the gospel reading, Matthew tells of the disciples in a storm at sea, terrified by the fear of chaos that is about to undo them. They are deeply afraid. But then, in their fear, they think they see Jesus! He is walking toward them, having mastered the chaos and tamed the storm. He says to them, "*Take heart, it is I: do not fear.*" And Peter says something rather strange in response: "*Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.*" So he's really saying, "*If that's you Jesus, tell me to risk my life, to tempt death, to walk across 6,000 fathoms of swirling, threatening sea. If it's really you, urge me to stick my hand into the fire; order me to jump off a skyscraper. If it's you who's going to be out there with me, I mean.*"

It's strange, isn't it, that Peter was uncertain that the voice from the waves was the voice of Jesus until, or unless, that voice told him to almost recklessly leave the safety of his boat, to step outside his comfort zone, to test the waters of a new and risky step in faith. "*Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult of our life's wild restless sea, day by day his voice is sounding, saying, 'Christian, follow me.'*" That's how the old gospel hymn by Cecil Frances Alexander put it. He invites Peter, and all those in the gospel boat, the ecumenical symbol for the church, beyond the safety of maintenance to the risk of mission, beyond their fear to the power of his accompanying presence. Not only has he mastered the storms of life, but he invites all disciples to walk in the freedom of well-being.

Peter, their leader, had to try first of course. He got out of the boat willingly, but then he looked away from Jesus and toward the storm, and began to sink. He cried out in his fear and Jesus rescued him; but he also reprimanded him, "*You of little faith, why did you doubt?*" The gospel here gives us a one-time dramatic exhibit of the power and transformative presence of Jesus, a power and presence needed to live the gospel life. This is not a generic tale, or a universal truth found in the form of a principle. This is a clear case of chaos being governed by Jesus, and the disciples being overwhelmed, not by the storm, but by their fear to respond and follow.

So how do we maintainers resist the force of Jesus' presence? Well, we always knew the storm was powerful, that the wind blows wild and will overwhelm us at times. We so often, without being aware of it, cling to our anxiety, doubt resisting the transformative presence of Jesus by clinging to what is known, even if flawed or inadequate. Peter had long lived on anxiety alert and was not inclined to give it up easily. He couldn't believe that Jesus was more powerful than the surging sea, so he looked away from Jesus and focused on what he knew for sure, namely the chaos of the storm and the waters. It is the normal he thought it was and always would be. He didn't calculate or take

into account that Jesus' presence had changed anything. He hadn't yet learned to trust that the newness was reliable.

Do you remember the movie The Truman Show, with Jim Carrey playing the main character whose whole life, from the time he was born, was the subject of a popular TV show? A whole city and cast of characters, parents included, had been built, and it was surrounded by water in a big dome overlooked by the show's director. Everyone's happy all the time, and it's a safe environment in which Truman is mostly content. But then he begins to wonder: what's beyond the known world he's lived in forever? He falls in love, and he becomes restless to get out of this safe but seemingly insulating world to the real world he only senses, or has "faith" is there.

At the end he takes a boat to cross the lake to freedom, and the director, who controls the weather in the domed set, whips up a series of storms Truman barely survives. He'd ventured out on the perilous waters before, and had turned back, but this time he overcomes his fear and rides out the storms in an effort to get to the far edge of his known world. Then the director's voice speaks from on high as if he's God, appropriate since he'd been playing god with Truman's life, assuring him that there's nothing out there for him. But Truman has to try, so he finally reaches the far side, and is faced with the choice of overcoming his fear by, in a nod to our gospel lesson, stepping out of the boat to walk on water, presumably, to take the last few steps toward the mission of his own new life.

Both the texts for today converge in a powerful way concerning our life as maintainers versus the good news that awaits us. The narrative of the brothers shows the way in which violent resistance keeps things as they are, though the dream still has its own say. The gospel story shows that chaos has been tamed, though well-established anxiety still wins out and wins Peter over, even though it leaves him stuck or sinking fast. They both speak of the problem of maintenance, one about the maintenance of violence and the news of a dream, the other about the maintenance of anxiety and the news of a presence. Both these

episodes tell of the always present contrast between the maintenance of the world as it is and the news of a more excellent way of abundance and new life that is the grace and gift of God.

Friends, this is what the church is about. We have a weekly practice of worship, whether together or apart, to actively and intentionally admit or confess our penchant for maintenance of a flawed way relied upon in the world as it is, and to profess and renew our hope to renounce our violence and relinquish our anxiety. In such weekly practices we proclaim, by text and word and music and prayer and art and giving and common bond of faith, that we are called by God in Christ to re-engage the dream and re-trust the presence. That is what fills the church with missional energy and generosity and joy. Sometimes the church falls back into old practices and habits that have tendencies toward embracing violence or anxiety – we're a flawed human community, after all! – but that is not our true character or our best way in the world. Thanks be to God for the promise, then, that we are people of mission, not maintenance, empowered by the Spirit. Amen.

Hymn **VU# 509**     *"I, the Lord of Sea and Sky"*  
(below, attached, sung or read as poetry)

# I, the Lord of Sea and Sky

(Here I Am, Lord)

Unison

G Am C C/G G D/F#

1 I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my peo- ple cry.  
 2 I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my peo- ple's pain,  
 3 I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame,

G Em Am7 C Am (F/C) D D/C

All who dwell in deep- est sin my hand will save.  
 I have wept for love of them, they turn a - way.  
 I will set a feast for them, my hand will save.

G Am/C G C/G G D/F#

I who made the stars of night, I will make their dark-ness bright.  
 I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love a - lone.  
 Fin-est bread I will pro- vide till their hearts be sat - is - fied.

G Em7 Am7 Am/C Am G/B Am7/C Dsus-D

Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?  
 I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?  
 I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send?

Words: Daniel L. Schutte 1984, alt.  
 Music: Daniel L. Schutte 1984, harm. Michael Pope, Daniel L. Schutte and John Weissrock 1983  
 Words copyright © 1981 Daniel L. Schutte and New Dawn Music.

HERE I AM, LORD  
 7 7 7 4 D with refrain

Refrain

D/F# G Gsus G C/B Am7 G C/E D7 G

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have

G Am G Am/C C Dsus D/F# D7

heard you call- ing in the night. I will

G Gsus G Am/G G C D7 G

go, Lord, if you lead me. I will

G C/G G Am7 C/D D G C/G D.C. G Fine

hold your peo - ple in my heart.

## RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Living Stewardship (consider your gifts to support the church's vision and mission)



## Prayers of the People

O Marvelous Mystery of heaven and earth, from where does our gratitude spring these COVID-summer days? How do we know to say thanks to you, transcendent Wonder in our midst? How

but from the days and weeks of sights and sounds that are our lives, leading us to consider the Great Beyond among us! How is it, holy One, that the frailest flowers dare the dangerous weather first? Such a question reminds us how children must always be thrust fully into the world, all at once, before life is ready for them, or they for it. What will happen to them, and what will they be like? Who can ever guess? Always on the brink of becoming, like some summer tremor of change to a new normal, children are always something more than what they are, yet always only themselves, your precious miracles, O God.

For all your miracles, sprouting still or now grown, who survive the pressures of time and budgets, inevitable personal crises and needs, we thank you. For those who plod along, from minute to minute in faithful service of your reign, who make no headlines and seek no trophies, who give and give again, countless, whose names are in the Book of Life, we thank you. And for ourselves, silent plodders, flawed saints, children big and small, we thank you also, never failing to voice our questions or doubts, at least to our silent selves, yet finding ourselves on the faith side of the great divide nonetheless.

For the church in all its oneness, a strong, united yearning arising out of flesh and spirit, who know of the real life pains and dangers of life and the more deeply real You, we pray for truth beyond explanation and myth, and for our movement from simple passing acquaintance with you to awareness of your gracious, daily, every-moment presence with us.

For a promise calling still to one faith, one dream that evil be shattered into scattered shards like glass on pavement, that laughter be the law of the day, and that injustice and racism, as well as COVID-19, will soon be gone for good, we pray with fervent hope.

For the fretful and the faint, the feeble and the faltering, the frantic and the infirm, we pray. *(add intercessions here ...)* May we who find ourselves released from maintenance for your mission, and relinquish our anxiety for faith in the future you hold for us. May we know the assurance of your blessing, God of Joseph and Jesus. Amen.

## WE CLOSE

Hymn VU# 657 "He Leadeth Me"  
(below, attached, sung or read as poetry)

657

### He Leadeth Me

1 He lead - eth me: O bless - ed thought O words with  
 2 Some - times 'mid scenes of deep - est gloom, some - times where  
 3 Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine, nor ev - er  
 4 And when my task on earth is done, when by thy

heaven - ly com - fort fraught! What - e'er I do, where -  
 E - den's bow - ers bloom, by wa - ters calm, o'er  
 mur - mur nor re - pine, con - tent, what - ev - er  
 grace the vic - tory's won, even death's cold wave I

'er I be, still 'tis God's hand that lead - eth me.  
 trou - bled sea, still 'tis his hand that lead - eth me.  
 lot I see, since 'tis my God that lead - eth me.  
 will not flee, since God through Jor - dan lead - eth me.

Refrain  
 He lead - eth me! He lead - eth me! By his own hand he lead - eth me!

Words: Joseph Henry Gilmore 1862  
 Music: William Batchelder Bradbury 1864

HE LEADETH ME  
 8 8 8 8 with refrain



**Blessing**

Go from this time of worship to take heart and overcome fear, for Christ is with you to support and save, and may the grace of Christ attend you, the love of God surround you, the Holy Spirit keep you, now and forever. Amen.

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**Announcements**

The Summer Worship Schedule has St. James responsible for Aug. 16, 23, and 30.

**Summer Worship, Brian’s Holidays, Office Closing**

The Summer Worship Schedule now has St. James responsible beyond today, Aug. 9<sup>th</sup>, so you’ll still receive notice of a service produced by St. James over the 3 weeks following Aug. 9<sup>th</sup>. Please be in touch with Pat Conway-Willis at 416-695-3976 if you have any questions about worship or don’t receive a notice. Brian will be taking a second two week holiday August 10<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>. The office will be closed Aug. 17<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>. during which time Halyna will be away. Blessings to you all for the remainder of August, and stay safe and be well.

**Pastoral Coverage for Brian’s Holidays**

Our now recently retired Pastoral Visitation Minister Nelsona Dundas is willing to be a pastoral contact for our members during Brian’s summer absences, though funerals and weddings will not be conducted in those time frames. Nelsona will be a pastoral presence for any who need her, however, simply by calling 416-620-4098.

***Decision to Postpone Return to In-Person Worship***

Your Council Executive leadership group met this past Wednesday, and wishes to convey to you the decision, after weighing all the factors and issues, pro and con, as well as the feedback offered by some of you, that we will not be returning to in-person worship until at least early October. We hope and trust that this decision will be tolerated if not embraced by all of you, even if you desperately wish to connect to your friends and your faith community face to face.

To partially satisfy that desire, we’re planning on holding a congregational gathering on Sunday afternoon, **September 13<sup>th</sup>**, at **2 pm** in the gymnasium to enable those who wish to come to see one another face to face, while maintaining physical distancing, and chat, laugh, plan. We also plan on holding more zoom calls, perhaps two or more times in September, so that we can see and hear from one another more often.

**Call for Prayers and Continued Giving**

We also trust that you will continue to hold all of the Bloordale circle of friends, our members, staff, renter groups and agencies, etc. in your prayers, and also support us, as you have all along, with your generous donations. If the spirit of giving is lacking in your life, or if you still need a good dose of it beyond your local church’s needs, consider the United Church of Canada’s appeal, to respond to the national and global devastation the pandemic has brought in its wake. See the details in the e-mail by which you received this service if you’d like to know more, or simply make a cheque out to Bloordale UC and mark UC Covid Appeal on the memo line.