

The Messenger

January 19 2022

Zion United Church

Sunday worship — 9:30 am

St Andrews United Church

Sunday worship — 11:00 am

**Pulpit
supply**



**Jan-Feb
2022**

If you have announcements to be included here please email them to: ckooyman@shaw.ca

It would be helpful if announcements for The Messenger are sent to the above address before Wednesday.

**Next Messenger will be
January 26, 2022**

Not happening in Zion until after Dr. Henry's update Jan 18. A committee has been struck to decide about Sundays after that. It will meet Jan 19. Louise

Annual Reports

Would you please hand in your annual reports
before Feb 10

And please, please, send **in doc file format** so it will be easy for me to copy and fit it in the publishing program that I am using. Thus it will save me loads of time.

Hanny

Askew's Cards



Please call Eleanor

at 250-546-8195 to order your Askews Cards until further notice.

I have lots available in \$20, \$50 and \$100 denominations.

You can pick them up from me at our mutual convenience or if necessary I can deliver them.

You can also leave your church contributions with me.

Thanks,
Eleanor



Wordless Thanks – Time with the Kids at Heart and Sermon January 16th, 2022

Last week in one of our scripture lessons we heard the story of the Magi coming to visit Jesus soon after he was born and bringing him and his mother some very special gifts – gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. Many of us have something that has gold in it, Frankincense comes from a plant that is made into oil used for anointing and healing, and Myrrh also

comes from a plant used in perfumes, medicines, cosmetics and embalming. These were very expensive, precious substances that were traded at that time. Today, in our scripture lessons we will be reminded of those gifts that were used in the story of the Exodus, when the people built a worship space and offered thanks to God, using anointing oil. We might be surprised that looking back those seven or eight thousand years earlier, people already used Frankincense and Myrrh in their worship and their daily lives – if they could afford them.

Today we have another story of one of those gifts being used. Mary of Bethany and her family were special friends of Jesus. At least three different times in the Bible we hear of Jesus stopping in to visit with them. Mary, Martha and Lazarus always welcomed him into their home. I wonder if Martha was the older sister, for she was always the organizer, made sure that a meal was ready, and served; and Mary was a quiet, a deep thinker. Once when Jesus visited Mary quietly sat at his feet, and listened as he shared his thoughts with others.

The next time we meet Mary, her brother Lazarus had died. Martha ran to meet Jesus, but Mary was so sad and overcome with grief that she just sat and wept. Lazarus had probably been embalmed with one of the gifts, Myrrh for his burial, and lay in the tomb. Imagine how this very quiet person must have felt when Jesus brought Lazarus back to life – it changed her life!

Today we meet Mary again, overcome with thankfulness that her friend Jesus was visiting. However, it seemed that she realizing that his life was in danger, she did a very special thing. Can you imagine what she did? It was the custom at that time that guests would take off their sandals, because the weather was very hot, dusty and dry, and have their feet washed at the door to be welcomed. Mary not only washed Jesus feet, but she rubbed them with Frankincense – with her long hair. We are reminded that Frankincense was very expensive. I wonder how the scent of the oil made Mary feel as she welcomed Jesus? How will it make Jesus and the others feel? Do you think that they all experienced the presence of God's Spirit? Let us remember Mary, who taught us the power of offering and Jesus who showed us the way.

Sermon: Wordless Thanks....January 16th 2022

May the Spirit of God be with us as we reflect on our Scripture passages today and on life. Amen.

A friend recently shared a story with me-

“As our mother lay dying in a hospital, 30 km. from her home, a neighbour whom we had never met, wordlessly offered a pot of soup at our parent's door in rural Ontario. She left her name but no address, so it was only through considerable sleuthing that one of my sisters later tracked her down to return her pot with gratitude. That simple gesture, a large pot of soup, released the family from some of the burden of daily living during the hours of vigil at the hospital. At each of the hearty meals it provided, we gave thanks for our new friend's generosity in our silent but grateful eating.”

A very appropriate story. “Preach the gospel, when necessary use words.” It turns out St. Francis of Assisi never said this. Rather, this saying derives from his prayer that his preaching might be by example in obedience of God's Holy Rule. Actions speak for themselves, but sometimes, as is the case of Mary's anointing of Jesus, they are subject to misinterpretation of words.

Let's imagine what it means to preach without words. Some of you may have expertise in American Sign Language, for example, here is how they say “Thank you”. But these signs are also words, just unvoiced. Can you think of a time in your life when a gesture went beyond words? When an action spoke louder than any words could say? Or, when you offered someone nothing more than the “bread” of your presence, or an anointing through your undivided attention?

In silence, I invite you to think back to one of those times and then I will share a story. (I would like to show it to you, but don't have the technology),

While Martha serves and Lazarus, Jesus and Judas Iscariot sit at table, Mary's wordless-action dominates the scene, punctuated by the pungent fragrance that fills the house. Even if you want to avert your eyes from the intimacy in the way she uses her hair to wipe Jesus' feet, your nose will not let you forget. You are drawn to the lingering evidence in the overpowering perfume that fills the house. While her action cannot be ignored, she offers no explanation or justification. It is a bold and daring act made more significant by silence. Silence speaks when words are not enough.

But we protest! We are people of the book. So, into the gap between motive and act, hearers and readers yearn to insert what Mary leaves out. What happens when we try?

Jesus has recently raised her brother Lazarus from the dead, perhaps this extraordinary anointing should be understood as an offering of gratitude in response. This explanation is speculative at best. There is no evidence to suggest that Mary rates her

brother's life as equal to one year of laborer's pay. For Judas, because the extravagance does not add up in his daily balancing of credit and debit, it is literally unaccountable. He criticizes what he cannot understand: Surely this huge outlay of money could have been used for greater benefit! He's right of course, in the earthly economy to give and take, profit and loss. This expenditure is in God's account book, however, which remains silent and demands our silence in return. For whatever the motive, Jesus receives the extravagant gift as an outpouring of Mary's deep love, just as he will soon wipe all of his disciples' feet in love, even though he knows one "has lifted his heel" against him (John 13:18). If we try, we might still smell the love that overwhelmed those gathered at Mary, Martha, and Lazarus' table. For many of us in the church, the account books have been saying that our churches cost too much to maintain. Every region of the United church knows the grief of the shutting and sale of much-loved buildings, whether urban or rural, large or small. So, it may be with some bemusement that we hear about God's specifications through Moses for the construction of the tabernacle, a structure to protect the second covenant with "God. In gratitude for God's mercy following the incident of the golden calf, they contribute their precious goods and skills to make not a graven image, but a movable home for their movable feast in worship. No expense is spared, no sensory experience left out; lit by lamps and perfumed by incense, the tent and art with its poles, clasps, and pillars, the curtain at the entrance, and the table with the bread of Presence make a sacred space for experiencing God's love. If you think about it, not much has changed except we expect our tabernacles to have foundations.

I invite you to experience the space in which you worship today, constructed with no less attention to detail than that lavished on God's design for the tabernacle. Can you feel the care that has gone into making your chair or pew comfortable - the wood smooth or the cushion soft? Can you see the beauty in the colors that drape the sanctuary? Can you hear the rich music in the instruments and voices? Do you discern the delicious scent of bread on the Sunday you celebrate Holy Communion? Does your mouth water for the taste of coffee or tea around which you will gather with friends after worship? All of this has been prepared with love, the same love that filled the house with fragrance at Bethany, the same love that is stirred into the soup of condolence or baked into the cupcakes of celebration.



The good news is that in our life together we are blessed both to receive and preach the gospel of grateful love through the actions that embody our faith. In the week ahead, we are all challenged to offer either a gesture or a prayer of thanks for a neighbour whether near or far.

Each of you has received a small envelope with two doves of peace in them to share with someone, or place on your table with prayer, to remind you of God's ever-present love.

Let us take a moment of silence experiencing God's presence ..

And we join in singing: **Said Judas to Mary VU 129 (v 1-3)**

Lorraine

Bell ringer January 16

Myrna Robinson

By Louise



Slow no Tempo Concert!

A cappella quartet. Slow No Tempo is four guys making music with just our voices, based in Kamloops, British Columbia.

<https://slownotempo.ca/>

Slow No Tempo was formed in the fall of 2018. We sing a wide variety of music; from rock to sea shanties to jazz to barber-shop and everything in between, all with our beautiful blend of voices and unique brand of humour.

Everyone is Welcome!!

Saturday, Feb 5th, 2 pm – 3 pm

(Doors open at 1:30)

Tickets: \$10 in advance or \$15 at the door

3335 Patterson Ave, St Joseph's Hall, Armstrong

Tickets available at Armstrong Spallumcheen Chamber of Commerce,

Mon – Fri, 10 am – 2 pm – **CASH only please** or phone Carol at 250 546 6215.

****Vaccine passport and ID must be shown at the door. Masks are mandatory. Thank you for your cooperation****

Thank you to the Armstrong Spallumcheen Chamber of Commerce who secured funding through the Artbeat Heartbeat Grant which makes this concert possible. Proceeds from this concert will go to St. Joseph's Parish to help offset the lost income from our IPE booth.

Carol Hill-Lonergan

250 546 6215

