

Light Christ Candle

Welcome Welcome to Humour Sunday. Enter; happiness is mandatory. Do you think God has a sense of humour? Today, the Worship Team will explore that question and leave the conclusion up to you.

Acknowledgement -by Tony Snow, Indigenous Minister, Chinook Winds Region, Alta. The Gathering, Lent/Easter 2024

L: We are bound on this land by relationships.

P: We are bound to God's creation and to one another.

L: Those relationships have benefited this community.

P: Those relationships have blessed us and cost others.

L: We speak acknowledgement of our presence.

P: We must learn to share, as God has shared with us.

L: In this land of McKee Treaty #2, of 1790,

P: we are bound to Indigenous neighbours and their fate.

L: Where we have failed in this relationship, forgive us and give us the wisdom to repair.

P: May we learn to live into our commitments to Truth and Reconciliation and to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,

L: And cast a better future for all.

Call to Worship by The Very Reverend Richard Bott, Vancouver, BC

L: From many places,

P: God calls us to this place of worship.

L: From play and from work,

P: From busyness and from relaxation,

L: From laughter and from tears,

P: God calls us to this place of worship.

L: To share and to learn,

P: To sing and to pray,

L: To be family of God,

P: To be family of God! Alleluia!

Ministry of Music -Doug Schell

Gathering Prayer -by David Lander, at Castleton-Grafton PC, Grafton, ON

"All our representatives are currently serving other customers. Your call is important to us. You have been placed in priority sequence. Please hold."

Do you ever feel that life is heavy on the "on hold" music? Even though you've read the words "You are precious in my name; I honour you; I love you." In scripture many times, do you still feel as if you are on the waiting list?

Do we gather to practise holding and waiting? Are we waiting for God to do something, or does God feel we are putting God on hold? Does our message leave God waiting? "You have been placed in priority sequence, God, please hold."

Surely, we gather not so much for God to do something, but to energize ourselves as a community to respond to what God has done and to wonder, imagine, and respond to what God might do through us. The priority is for our worship to be an engaging and encouraging connection with God. We worship.

Gathering Hymn Worship the Lord, VU # 401

Refrain	Raising our hands	Praying and training	Called to be	Bringing the bread	Now in response to
Worship the Lord	as a sign of	that	partners with	and the	the life
(worship the Lord)	rejoicing,	we be a blessing,	God in creation,	wine to the table,	you are giving,
worship the Father,	and with our lips our	and by our	honouring Christ as	asking that we may	help us, O Father,
the Spirit, the Son,	togetherness	handiwork daily	the	be led and enabled,	to offer our living,
raising our hands	voicing,	professing:	Lord of the nation,	truly united to build	seeking a just and a
(raising our hands)	giving ourselves to	we are committed	we must be ready	new communities,	healing society,
in devotion to God	a life of	to serving humanity,	for risk	worship and work	worship and work
who is one!	creativity,	worship and work	and for sacrifice,	must be one!	must be one!
	worship and work	must be one!	worship and work	Refrain	Refrain
	must be one!	Refrain	must be one!		
	Refrain		Refrain		

Children's Ministry -a few jokes to start

Why did Noah never go fishing? **Because he only had two worms!**

What kind of car does Jesus drive? **A Christler!**

Who was the smartest man in the Bible? **Abraham, because he knew a Lot!**

How does Moses make his coffee? **Hebrews it!**

What is Eve's favorite food? **Ribs!**
 Why didn't Jonah trust the ocean? **Because there was something fishy about it!**
 What is God's favorite food? **Praisens!**
 How do angels greet each other? **Halo, halo, halo!**
 What is a mathematician's favorite book of the Bible? **Numbers!**
 Why did the sponge go to church? **Because it was hole-y!**
 What type of phone did Delilah use? **A Samson (Samsung)!**
 What did God do to cure Moses' headache? **He gave him two tablets!**
 How do you know that atoms are Catholic? **Because they have mass!**
 What did Moses say when he saw people worshipping the golden calf? **Holy cow!**
 What is the best way to study the Bible? **You Luke into it!**

Children's Prayer

Dear loving God. We are glad you gave us a sense of humour. We use it to laugh at ourselves and at funny situations. Sometimes we have to deal with hard things, and a sense of humour helps us get through those times. Teach us to find fun and laughter in even the silliest situations. We trust that you will keep your sense of humour with us when we stray from your good words. Thank you God, we love you. And that's no joke. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

Hymn **Spirit, Open My Heart**, MVU # 79

Refrain	God, replace my stony heart	Write your love upon my heart	May I weep with those who
Spirit, open my heart	With a heart that's kind and	As my law, my goal, my story.	weep,
To the joy and pain of living.	tender.	In each thought, word, and	Share Your grace
As you love, may I love,	All my coldness and fear	deed,	with my sisters and brothers.
In receiving and in giving,	To your grace I now surrender.	May my living bring you glory.	In welcoming Christ
Spirit, open my heart.	Refrain	Refrain	May we welcome one another.
			Refrain

Prayer of Confession -by Gord Dunbar, Kincardine, ON

L: Let us come humbly before God in confession:

P: Wait a minute! Haven't we just been singing about laughter as healing? How does laughter and joy and giggling and delight match with confession?

L: We come humbly because God already knows what's heavy on our hearts. We come to confess because it opens us to God's delight.

P: You mean like a parent who tries desperately not to laugh when a child tries to get away with something behind the parent's back – even though the parent knows from experience what's happening?

L: Exactly! As we enter our time of silent prayer, imagine God's twinkling eyes as you share what you've tried to hide. (Time for silent prayer). Amen

Words of Assurance -by Gord Dunbar, Kincardine, ON

Think of the story of the Prodigal Son. Before he even begins to make his plea to come home, his father rushes out, enfolds him in an embrace of unconditional love, and commands a lavish feast to celebrate his son's return. That kind of unreserved welcome back is Jesus' own story of God's grace. That same grace is ours without asking because God is love.

Offertory Prayer -by Gord Dunbar, Kincardine, ON

Take and bless these offerings, O God, that, through them, we may find connection with our aching world.

In our joyful giving, may we find hope and healing for ourselves. In our offering, may we foster delight in others, which brings healing laughter. Amen.

Hymn **Neverending Joy**, MVU # 40

Refrain	God of every tribe, every	God of every hill, every valley,	God of every song, every
Never ending joy, never ending	language,	God of every leaf, every tree,	story,
joy,	God of every river and sea,	God of every cloud, every	God of every captive set free,
never ending joy, never ending	God of every mountain and	raindrop,	God of every dance, every
joy,	island,	you bring joy to me.	footstep,
Never ending joy, never ending	you bring joy to me.	Refrain	you bring joy to me:
joy!	Refrain		Refrain

Scripture Readings

Philippians 2:1-5 - Make My Joy Complete (NRSVUE)

If then, there is any comfort in Christ, any consolation from love, any partnership in the Spirit, any tender affection and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility. Regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, assuming human

likeness. And being found in appearance as a human, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death - even death on a cross. Therefore, God exalted him even more highly and gave him the name that is above every other name, so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father.

Reflection -by Susan Lukey, Editor (COPYRIGHT Susan Lukey, 2025) *The Gathering, Pentecost 1, 2025.*

Does Jesus have a sense of humour? We found this on the United Church website – a temporary sign from *Kingston Road United, Toronto*:

***“Free beer. Just kidding.
Free Jesus every Sunday morning”.***

When we think of laughter, we usually associate it with joy and delight. We laugh in wonder at a surprise. We laugh when we are having fun or being entertained and enjoying ourselves. We laugh when something good suddenly comes into our lives. Laughter can be contagious. We laugh in amusement at a good joke or pun.

Sometimes a point can be made better with the use of humour. Take for example this story of the Rabbi and the soap maker: *A rabbi and a soap maker went for a walk together. The soap maker said, “What good is religion? Look at all the trouble and misery of the world! Still there, even after years - thousands of years - of teaching about goodness and truth and peace. Still there, after all the prayers and sermons and teachings. If religion is good and true, why should this be?” The rabbi said nothing. They continued walking until he noticed a child playing in the gutter. Then the rabbi said, “Look at that child. You say that soap makes people clean but see the dirt on that youngster. Of what good is soap? With all the soap in the world, over all these years, the child is still filthy. I wonder how effective soap is, after all!” The soap maker protested. “But, Rabbi, soap cannot do any good unless it is used!”*

But there are other forms of laughter. There is a laugh that is condescending and derisive, showing contempt or scorn for another person or a situation. There is laughter that ridicules another person. There is also laughter that expresses disbelief at what one has experienced or heard and laughter that shows power or triumph over a situation. Sometimes laughter comes out of nervousness.

There’s a story told about a vicar who was showing a small boy around his church. Standing before a war memorial he said: ‘These are the names of local people who died in the Services.’ The boy look horrified and asked, ‘Did they die in the morning services or the evening services?’

Sometimes a joke or story hits too close to the truth. Take for example Trump’s reaction to the late-night comics. Some people can’t see the humour if it’s about them. Of course, to be a laughingstock is no laughing matter. In this case, one is the subject of ridicule and mockery, being made fun of for perceived incompetence or a certain action considered amusing to others but not to the one being laughed at.

Jesus took an atheist out fishing and the atheist accidentally dropped an oar and watched it float away. Jesus stepped out of the boat, walked across the water to the oar, grabbed it, and walked back to the boat. The next day, a friend asked the atheist if he had enjoyed fishing with the Lord. “It was okay,” he replied, “but would you believe that guy can’t swim?”

The use of laughter in the Bible is interesting. God’s laughter reinforces the power of God. *Ah, the power of God.* Take this story: *To rile up his Christian friends, the atheist in the high school class was always looking for scientific speculation that would throw doubt on God or the Bible. Scouring the Internet, he discovered research from a student at an obscure university who hypothesized that due to weather and wind patterns, the Red Sea was less than a foot deep when Moses led the Hebrews across it. “It wasn’t even up to their knees,” the atheist sneered. One of the Christian friends exclaimed, “It’s a miracle!” “What miracle?” the atheist asked. “Anybody could have waded across it!” The Christian grinned. “Simple. God drowned Pharaoh’s entire army in less than a foot of water!”*

Or this one: *A woman is walking on the beach with her little grandson. Suddenly a huge wave sweeps the boy out to sea. Desperate, the woman looks up to heaven and says, “God, please rescue my grandson, my only grandson, the light of my life!” Miraculously, the next big wave deposits the little boy at her feet, completely unharmed. She looks up to heaven and says, “He had a hat!”*

Sometimes humour comes from a child. These instances are always an unexpected delight. *“Dad, I want to ask you a question,” said little Josh after his first day of Sunday School. “Of course,” said his Dad. “The teacher was reading the Bible, about the Children of Israel building the Temple, the Children of Israel crossing the Red Sea, the Children of Israel making the sacrifices,” said Josh. “So what’s your question?” his Dad asked. “Well, didn’t the grown-ups do anything?!”*

As we read scripture, we can consider how laughter is being used in a specific verse. Who is laughing? Who is being laughed at? Or are they being laughed **with**? This story illustrates the last point. Is the story being mean or funny?

The Presbyterian Church called a meeting to decide what to do about their squirrel infestation. After much prayer and consideration, they concluded that the squirrels were predestined to be there, and they shouldn’t interfere with God’s divine will. At the Baptist Church the squirrels had taken an interest in the baptistery. The deacons met and decided to put a waterslide on the baptistery and let the squirrels drown themselves. The squirrels liked the slide and unfortunately, knew instinctively how to swim, so twice as many squirrels showed up the following week. The Lutheran Church decided that they were not in a position to harm any of God’s creatures. So, they humanely trapped their squirrels and set them free near the Baptist Church. Two weeks later the squirrels were back when the Baptists took down the waterslide. The Episcopalians tried a much more unique path by setting out pans of whiskey around their church in an effort to kill the squirrels with alcohol poisoning. They sadly learned how much damage a band of drunk squirrels can do. But the United church came up with a very creative strategy! They baptized all the squirrels and made them members of the church. Now they only see them at Christmas and Easter.

While **Ecclesiastes 3:4** declares that there is a time to weep and a time to laugh, in the stories of scripture we may want to consider the experience of the one laughing and the one laughing **at** or **with** that person.

Atheist: "Do you honestly believe that Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish?" Preacher: "I don't know, sir, but when I get to heaven, I'll ask him." The Atheist considered this and then asked: "But suppose he isn't in heaven?" Preacher: "Then you ask him."

While reflecting on the use of laughter in the Bible, we might also reflect on laughter in our worship. Are there times for weeping and for laughing? Does our worship ever set up others to be laughed at? Do we acknowledge the sadness that may be present even as we share times of laughter and joy? What is the role of laughter in our faith and worship? We'll close with this cute story on generosity.

Down in the south, there are many churches known as "answer back" churches. When the preacher says something, the congregation replies. One Sunday, a preacher was speaking on what it would take for the church to become better. He said, "If this church is to become better, it must take up it's bed and walk."

The congregation said, "Let it walk, Preacher, let it walk." Encouraged by their response, he went further. "If this church is going to become better, it will have to throw aside it's hindrances and run!" The congregation replied, "Let it run, preacher, let it run!" Now really into his message, he spoke stronger. "If this church really wants to become great, it will have to take up it's wings and fly!" "Let it fly, Preacher, let it fly!" the congregation shouts. The Preacher gets louder. "If this church is going to fly, it will cost money!" The congregation replied. "Let it walk, Preacher, let it walk."

So, does Jesus have a sense of humour? I would have to say, "yes", considering the antics we come up with. I bet He has a smile on His face right now. Amen.

Prayers of the People Encourage us, O God, to discover the thread of humour in life's events. When we are tempted to throw up our hands in defeat, strengthen us through your laughing Spirit to persevere.

When we are tempted to despair, that nothing we do will make a difference, encourage us to grin with a resolve to foster transformation in Christ's name. May your grace bubble like chortles of glee-filled freedom, lighten our burdens as we love one another. Amen.

Parting Hymn *This Is the Day*, MVU # 122

This is the day that God has made
We will rejoice and be glad!
This is the day that God has made;
We will rejoice and be glad!

Singing hallelu, singing hallelu,
Singing hallelu!
We will rejoice and be glad!
Singing hallelu, singing hallelu,
Singing hallelu!
We will rejoice and be glad!

Benediction -by Sue Campbell, Knox UC, Caledon Village, Caledon, ON

We are going to make some statements, and we invite you to respond with either, "Oh, yes he did" or "Oh no, he didn't."

Jesus said, "Simon, just give up on the fishing and call it a day." "Oh no, he didn't."

Jesus said, Try something different, Cast your net on the other side." "Oh, yes he did"

Jesus said, "When it comes to money, make as much as you can and keep it for yourself." "Oh no, he didn't."

Jesus said, "Be generous. Give to the poor. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." "Oh, yes he did"

Jesus said, "Be quick to pick a fight and if someone hits you on the cheek, punch 'em in the stomach." "Oh no, he didn't."

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Oh, yes he did"

Jesus said, "Be anxious and fearful, because you never know what's going to happen, and there's lots that's scary in the world." "Oh no, he didn't."

Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life. Give your attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen." "Oh, yes he did"

Follow Jesus and don't be afraid, for God is with you unto the ends of the earth. And may God bless you and keep you, may God's light shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May God look upon you with kindness and give you joy and give you peace. Amen.

Choral Amen

Extinguish the Christ Candle