

# *South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges*

## *“Labour Day Sunday” – September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020*

**Prelude:** “It’s a Small World After all” –

### **Welcome & Announcements:**

Good morning folks. I was talking to Cleata Morris on Monday and she and the Friends of Buxton Male Choir are hosting a free sing song / music afternoon this Sunday at 2 pm, on Hilie’s side lawn (first street North of Hydro Towers (Old Railroad Tracks) – will be taped off towards AD Shadd Road). All safety precautions will need to be followed, including 6 foot distancing – bring your mask and lawn chair. Parking will be on the street. You will need to give your name and phone number on entry. They are planning an one hour concert and everyone is invited. They have enough room for at least 100 people.

Homecoming 2020 on this Labour Day Weekend will be virtual. This year’s theme is “Generations”. Check out [buxtonmuseum.com](http://buxtonmuseum.com) for links to events. (Show clip of Homecoming invite).

Yesterday was Alfred Authier’s 90th Birthday. Folks from Talbot Street will be doing a Birthday drive by their house this Sunday at 1:30 pm. Please gather at Talbot Street at 1:20 pm, so we can all go down together. Bring some balloons to tie to your car - if you wish.

Continue to keep in touch with others and to share our websites; at [southbuxton.ca](http://southbuxton.ca), and [talbotstreet.ca](http://talbotstreet.ca)

Thank you to Christie Coatsworth for our music this morning. Thank you to Tracey Major for putting together the Power Point slides.

### **Lighting of the Christ Candle:**

If you wish – grab a candle to use while we share our services. The flame of the Candle reminds us of the light of Christ that collects us as the faith community, “We are One in the Spirit”. Thanks be to God.

### **Call To Worship:**

**Eric:** On this first Sunday of celebrating Creation, we stand in the company of giants,

**People:** – **the trees who have lived longer than we have, housing a myriad of creatures, and given us our holy breath.**

**Eric:** Let us breathe, and pray, and sing today, and worship with the emerald forests.

### **Hymn:** VU 226 “For the Beauty of the Earth”

- 1 For the beauty of the earth,  
for the glory of the skies,  
for the love which from our birth

over and around us lies,  
God of all, to you we raise  
this our hymn of grateful praise.

2 For the beauty of each hour  
of the day and of the night,  
hill and vale, and tree and flower,  
sun and moon, and stars of light,  
God of all, to you we raise  
this our hymn of grateful praise.

3 For the joy of human love,  
brother, sister, parent, child,  
friends on earth, and friends above,  
for all gentle thoughts and mild,  
God of all, to you we raise  
this our hymn of grateful praise.

4 For each perfect gift sublime  
to our race so freely given,  
graces human and divine,  
flowers of earth and buds of heaven,  
God of all, to you we raise  
this our hymn of grateful praise.

### **Opening Prayer:**

**God, we seek your wisdom today from your mysterious giants and their neighbours, the trees and other beings who make up the forests. All are fearfully and wonderfully made. The trees and their forest companions were our first neighbours and teachers, and they are our teachers today. Help us to seek their wisdom anew.**

### **Scripture: Acts 17: 22 - 28** "Paul in Athens" Story Form

Paul was a wise teacher who travelled far and wide to tell people about God's love and to share Jesus' story with everyone who would listen. As he travelled, he went through many different landscapes and saw many species of flowers, creatures of the forest including birds, animals, butterflies, and olive groves with rows and rows of trees laden with fruit. Paul looked around in amazement at God's creations within the forest. He stopped to take in the smell of the ripening olives and admired the beautiful green foliage of the trees that surrounded the vines; trees with large spreading roots and knotted roots and trunks. The vines and trees that had been in the groves for thousands of years held the secrets of the forest. The fruits of these olive groves provided gifts of food for many generations, and the trees had taken their nourishment and gift of life from the rich soil of Earth. The old trees had sheltered travellers, birds, and other creatures. Paul listened to the wind whistling through the trees. It seemed like the trees were speaking and saying, "We are part of God's great creation, and we have seen God's creation change and grow."

The trees had paid attention to the people and creatures throughout many generations. Paul had paid attention to the wonders of creation. Now, as he enters Athens, Paul pays attention to the people of Athens.

When the boat landed, Paul began walking towards the city. He had time to examine everything closely because he was waiting for his friends Timothy and Silas to join him. Paul noticed the many statues to many gods. He wondered about these idols when he saw a sign “To the god with no name.” Paul said to himself, “I know who that God is.” When he was ready to speak to the people, he was taken to a place called the Areopagus. This was a hill in the middle of the town, and it was where the court met. Paul was to be a guest speaker, and the authorities and others in the court were going to be listening very hard to see if they heard anything wrong in what Paul said. It was illegal to preach about a foreign god in Athens. Paul began by saying that God created all things. He talked about the olive groves; the wind whispering through the trees; and the flowers, birds, animals, and insects that he had seen in the groves.

Paul told the people that he had admired all their temples, monuments, and statues as he walked around the city. These all showed that they were very religious people; Paul was pleased about that. He became excited as he pointed out that the “unknown god” was the one true God – the God of every nation, culture, and religion.

“This one true God is the Creator who has made heaven and earth and humankind,” Paul proclaimed. “God is everywhere and doesn’t have to live in shrines, altars, and monuments made by human beings. Creator God doesn’t need anything that could be given by human hands. God is too big for a statue.” Paul then explained that we see how awesome God is when we look at creation. “God gave every living thing its breath and life; caterpillars, worms, butterflies, birds, animals, trees, and forests. God made all the humans who inhabit Earth.”

Paul went on to say that God is close to all of us. “We live in God, we move in God, we exist in God. We are all God’s children,” preached Paul.

### **Reflection: “Seeing God in the Forest”**

When we were on Vancouver Island in 2017, we had the opportunity to go through the Cathedral Grove. Cathedral Grove is located in MacMillan Provincial Park, near the centre of Vancouver Island on the highway which goes to Port Alberni. Cathedral Grove is one of the most accessible stands of giant Douglas fir trees in Canada. Standing at the bottom of these majestic trees is overpowering. The word in our service today is majestic – these trees are majestic as the tower over you up to 75 meters (over 200 ft), and are up to 9 meters (29 ft) in circumference. The oldest trees in Cathedral Grove are 800 years old, which started growing in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Majestic is an understatement. Unexplainable emotions and wonder overpower you while you walk through the Grove. Even driving through the Grove on the highway with your car, is truly amazing, as the canopy reaches over the road at least 100 feet above you. It is truly breathtaking.

Last week we asked, “Has God forgotten about us Christians during COVID?” The question we might ask ourselves is, “Where are we looking for God?”

Paul arrives in Athens and as he is looking around he see those statues that they use to honour their Gods. I heard a story once, that the Greek folks had statues of almost every different type of

God – to make sure they were covered. Paul notices the statue that says – “To the Unknown God”! When Paul gets the opportunity to talk to the people of Athens, he shares their commitment to the faith and their Gods and Paul tells them he knows their “Unknown God”. Their Unknown God is the God of Creation, the God that has created nature and all things living, including the rocks, flowers, trees and even the grass they walk on.

As humans, we often see life through the lens of our human life experiences. What if we could look at life from the lens of trees, lens of the animals that live in trees, or the lens of the collection of trees - the community of the forest? What does the forest and the trees teach us about God? Our very first story of human creation happens in the forest. Humans use the forest for protection. We use forests to hike through. Hiking through the forest is a whole lot more interesting than hiking along your gravel road. We see so much more in the forest. We can be surprised by the chipmunks who scamper in front of us. We can be awed by the deer we see far off. We stop and watch them as they eat, play and then wander deeper into the forest. We can learn so much walking through the forest.

The forest can be a community much like our church community. The forest is a collection of trees and shrubs, flowers and ferns, rich fertile soil and mud, and the endless selections of animals, bugs, birds and other crawly things. In our Church Community, we too are a collection of people, of rituals and traditions, of past stories and future hopes, and everything else each and every one of us bring to our service this morning. But hopefully most of all the expectation that God is with us, God leads us, and God will provide. Where are we as a community looking for God?

We call our very Church buildings the “House of God”. In the past, people came to Church to experience God in this very building. Since March we are not allowed to gather in that building. We have learnt to do Church in a new way – online. Many of us may not find our online services to be - church. But we want to stay connected. Perhaps we could look for God in unexpected places, such as our online service. Where might we see God in our services? How do we see creation in our Services? Do we feel that God is the Creator of technology, of the internet, of Zoom? For many of us the internet is mysterious – we do not really understand how it works – it is unknown to us. It has become our “Unknown God”. Yet the Internet is one of the greatest communication tool that humans have ever had. We can communicate our service not only to each other – but to the whole world. Someone in Africa could watch our service each Sunday if they wanted to. There is no cost and it covers the whole world. What a wonderful Creation.

Like the people of Athens, we too search for God. We may search in the most unlikely of places and guess what – we find God. In the community of the forest, in the squirrels and ferns, giant trunks and branches, mosses and shrubs, we find God. In the forest, we share the air with the plants, breathing in the oxygen they exhale, and thanking them for taking in the carbon we breath out, therefore keeping us all alive.

For at least the next month we will be sharing community online. Where do we see God? Keep looking. Keep sharing what comes your way. Share what strikes you as most mysterious or inspiring about our online services. We have never done this before – until five months ago, and what we are doing here today in September is nothing like we did in May and April. God continues to create new – even online. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

**Hymn: VU 238 “O Lord, My God”**

- 1 O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder  
consider all the works thy hand hath made,  
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,  
thy power throughout the universe displayed.  
*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,  
How great thou art! How great thou art!  
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,  
How great thou art! How great thou art!*
- 2 When through the woods and forest glades I wander,  
I hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;  
when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur  
and hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze.  
*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,  
How great thou art! How great thou art!  
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,  
How great thou art! How great thou art!*
- 4 When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation  
and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!  
Then I shall bow in humble adoration  
and there proclaim, 'My God, how great thou art!'  
*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,  
How great thou art! How great thou art!  
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,  
How great thou art! How great thou art!*

**Invitation to Share Our Gifts:**

**Eric:** God provides us with learning from unexpected places. We are blessed by the beautiful nature that surrounds us including the majestic forests. In all of nature, we can see God's work and blessings. We give our blessings to be the unexpected way we share God's love with others. Let us give in love.

**Offertory: VU 541 “Praise God From Whom...”**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

**Offertory Prayer:**

**We are people who are connected to our forests. We see your mysterious teaching presence everywhere in the jungles and woods, groves, and orchards. We are overwhelmed**

with gratitude. May our gift to you today remind us to look to the trees to find your wisdom every day. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

**Hymn: VU 400 "Listen To Your Children Praying"**

Lord, listen to your children praying,  
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;  
Lord, listen to your children praying,  
send us love, send us power, send us grace!

**Pastoral Prayer:**

**Eric:** God of winds and leaves, of the spirit that moves through the primeval forests, we are here to listen to the mysteries you speak.

**People:** We pray that you will lead us to your voice in the tallest trees and smallest seedlings, in the forest floor, in all that crawls and flies and makes a home in your first gardens. O Lord, hear our prayer.

**Eric:** God of the Internet, God of the Zoom call – your Holy Spirit moves among us as we listen and discern your mysteries for us.

**People:** May you lead us with your voice to you, in all that excites us and puzzles us with the Internet and online services. O Lord, hear our prayer.

**Eric:** Continue to bless us with wonder and gratitude every day.

**People:** Please help us to use our gratitude for good and to protect our forests, and other ways you teach us about life. O Lord, hear our prayer.

**Eric:** Teach us to learn and to remember the beauty of your creation, including those plants, who give us our breath.

**People:** Through your grace, O Lord, hear our prayer.

**Eric:** All these things we pray in Jesus' Name as we pray his prayer:

*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, And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us,  
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

**Benediction:**

**Eric:** As we leave today, may we listen for the unexpected. May the unexpected guide our steps and call us into community with each other, now and forever more.

**Go Now in Peace:**

Go now in peace, never be afraid.  
God will go with you each hour of ev'ry day.  
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.  
Know He will guide you in all you do.

Go now in love, and show you believe.  
Reach out to others, so all the world can see.  
God will be there, watching from above.  
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.  
Amen, Amen, Amen.

**Postlude:** "What a Wonderful World" – Louis Armstrong