

**Summerland United Church**  
**August 11**  
**All of my Days: God**

**Threshold**

This week we introduce our theme for the rest of the summer called *All of my days*. The intention of this series is to help us learn and practice daily prayer. This is not intended to be onerous or add to our already full plates, but to remind us that pray and the presence of God in our lives is as close as our next breath.

We will be introducing the practice of prayer beads – a practice that has existed within Christianity and other religions for millennia. We begin our series remembering the words of 13<sup>th</sup> century Mystic Meister Eckart who said, *If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough.*

Prayers of gratitude and praise begin our every connection with the Holy One, our Creator. Can we live with a grateful heart all of our days?

**Scripture:** Isaiah 56:1-8, selections The Inclusive Bible

Thus says our Creator:

“Do what is right! Work for Justice! For my liberation is about to come, and my justice is about to be revealed.”

Happy is the person who does this and happy is the person who holds to it – who observes the Sabbath and does not disrespect it and keeps one’s hands from wrongful deeds.

For Thus says, our Creator:

“To all those who keep my Sabbath, who choose that which pleases me and hold fast to my Covenant - to them I will create within my temple and its walls a memorial, and a name better than that of my children. I will give them an everlasting name that will never be erased.

And to all people who join themselves to me, ministering to me, loving the name of Creator and worshiping me – all who observe the Sabbath and do not disrespect it and cling to my Covenant – these I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar, for my house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”

Reader: (after Scripture is read) May God bless our understanding of these sacred words.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

**Reflection**

Before I left for my time off, we gathered for a second hour after service to discuss our feelings and emotions about our impending move. We talked a little about change, grief and hope. I want to say thank you to all those who participated in this conversation, especially the hard parts of change, letting go and the sorrow of losing our property.

The session we had in July was by no means the only time and option for talking about our emotions, rather it was the start of an ongoing conversation, which needs to continue.

For me, like many, change in general and this change in particular is creating a lot of anxiety, stress and fear. I can imagine that as we navigate our way through all the things we have to do and all the emotions we are feeling, we won't be at our best selves. Tempers may run short, tears may be close to the surface, and our desire for some modicum of control may make us less flexible, patient and compassionate.

This is normal human response to hard emotions. And while having these feelings and emotions are valid, we need to also try to remember we're a community of people who try to be flexible, patient and compassionate.

I wanted to do this series on prayer and prayer beads, because my hope is that we can, as a community, commit to the spiritual practice of what I'm going to call - pause praying – all of our days. The bracelets act as a reminder to breathe, express gratitude. Touch a bead and be reminded of God's presence in our lives.

A pause prayer. A fleeting moment, less than a second, where with the intake of breath we inhale spirit and with an exhale we breath out love.

One of the things I learned in therapy was that we need to practice our self care, or tools for soothing ourselves in times of stress – when we're not stressed. This way, they become almost second nature and easy to recall when we do find ourselves upset, frightened, anxious or sad.

In the passage we heard today, Isaiah tells us *that all people who join themselves to God, minister to God, love the name of Creator and worship God – all who observe the Sabbath and cling to my Covenant – these I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer.*

The Covenant Isaiah is referring to, is spoken Isaiah 42:6. *"I am God; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations."*

Centuries later, this *light for all nations* spoken about in Isaiah would be interpreted as Jesus. And centuries after that – here we are a community of people who have joined together to minister, love and worship God, through our understanding of the teaching of Jesus. We are here at the holy mountain, joyful in a house of prayer.

This is not our usual house of prayer. It is different, strange and a little uncomfortable. (we're bringing our chairs, so it will be more comfortable later, at least physically). But before we get to the comfort, we have to traverse the discomfort of letting go, moving and resettling. We have to go through the pain of loss, the grief of ending before we can find joy in newness, hope in beginnings.

For some this will be easier than it will be for others, so we need to remember that and practice patience, flexibility and compassion. We need to remember that, as God says to Isaiah – I will take you by the hand and keep you – Happy is the person who remembers to worship God, to minister and love. We need to remember the teachings of Jesus – and the new covenant spoken by God to him – that you love one another as I have loved you.

And that's a lot to remember. And so, I return to the prayer beads. Beads that we can hold in our hands, wrap around our wrists and believe they are infused with all our prayers, all the things we want to remember, all the things we want to pray for and trust that when we touch those beads, even if we don't consciously remember everything – we remember we are beloved by God and our prayers will be received with love.