



Wildwood
Mennonite
Church

Baptism and Membership: My Beloved

Wildwood Mennonite Church // November 1, 2020

Worship Leader: Kara W // Music Leader: Josephine K // Sermon: Joe H

Welcome to Wildwood!

Good Morning! And welcome to Wildwood. It's so nice to be able to say that and physically be at Wildwood with some of you this morning. So whether you are here in church dressed in your Sunday best with matching mask, at home in your favourite chair and sweatpants, or reading these words later in the week, I hope that you can find comfort and joy as we worship together.

Music For Meditation // Josephine K

Call to Worship

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of God's glory.

The Lord of hosts is with us.

Let us lift up our hearts!

We lift them up to the Lord!

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God!

It is a good and joyful thing to give God thanks and praise!

Let us pray:

Holy God,

we come together as your people

searching for sacred space,

longing to be cherished,

craving a real connection.

In this time of worship

let thankfulness sink deep

and joy spring up.

We lift our hearts and souls and minds

to the God of our creation,

for we are wholly yours

now and forever. Amen.

Carol Penner



Peace Candle

You come to us
In unexpected places,
In a zoom meeting,
In a journey on a dusty road,
In conversations,
In the stillness.
You come in the midst of our doubt, our fear, our sorrow

You bring us peace
And we pray for the places where there is no peace
Countries torn by war
Refugees seeking homes
Persons facing discrimination.

You bring peace
Peace to the tensions and conflicts within us
To the regrets, the failure,
The broken relationships
The lost friendships

You bring peace
For you are a friend to us
When we are alone
When we are lonely
Unseen you are there

You bring us peace
And we pray that we too
may become peacemakers.

(Susan Miller)

Song // *Jesus, Be the Centre* // Sing the Story #31

Offering Prayer

We give in grateful thanksgiving for all that God has given us.
In the upside down world of the gospel,
we measure our wealth not by what we have,
but what we can give away.
Let us give away generously, in this offering,
To bless your church, your people, your creation.

Children's Story // [Click here for video storytime with Brenda!](#)

This week's story is "[Mama, Do You Love Me?](#)" written by Barbara M. Josse and illustrated by Barbara Lavallee.



Song // *Obey My Voice* // Hymnal: A Worship Book #163

Faith Stories // Sean Baergen, Peter Lippmann, David Schwinghamer, Kara Wolfe

Scripture // *Inclusive Bible* translation

Mark 1:9-11

It was then that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan River by John. Immediately upon coming out of the water, Jesus saw the heavens opening and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. Then a voice came from the heavens: "You are my Beloved, my Own. On you my favor rests."

Sermon // “My Beloved” // Joe Heikman

(If you’d rather watch than read, the link to the video version will be posted to wildwoodmennonite.org, and included in the congregational email on the Tuesday following.)



It must have been intimidating to stand on the bank of the river that day. / would have been intimidated, if not outright terrified... facing the water, in front of the crowd, feeling the pressure of expectations that cousin John had been building up for weeks, knowing that this was a step that could not be undone, a display that would make the journey spiral far out of control. For better and for worse.

I haven’t felt many individual moments with that fine of a point, but I have felt the weight of moments of consequence. Interviews that would make or break a career. Conversations that defined a relationship. Signing your life away at the bank. Stepping towards a family crisis, or simply being present when the waves crash around you. Moments of making a commitment, accepting responsibility or breaking faith in search of something better.

Moments when you have to choose: will you move forward into the water, or will you stay on the riverbank?

In his moment, Jesus moved into the water.

The symbolism of that movement has never been entirely clear. We don’t know exactly what Jesus the Christ thought he was doing in choosing to be baptized.

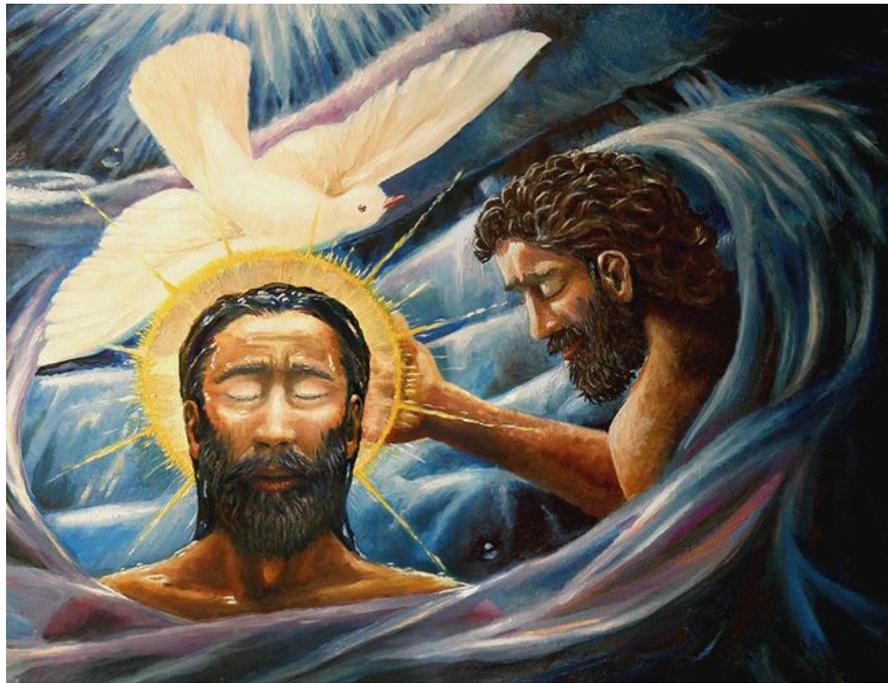
Perhaps he was purifying himself in preparation for the journey ahead. Perhaps he was walking the path of Moses in the Red Sea, embodying the history of the whole People of Israel in himself. Perhaps he was setting an example for his future followers, demonstrating the way of

righteousness. Perhaps he was making a political statement, enacting an inauguration, declaring the beginning of a new Kingdom over and against the empire of Rome.

Perhaps all of the above; we don't really know what Jesus was thinking.

Christians have long clashed over the meaning of this moment and what, as Christ-followers, it is calling us to do.

But what happened next is as clear as day: *Jesus saw the heavens opening and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. Then a voice came from the heavens: "You are my Beloved, my Own. On you my favor rests"*



[image by David Zelenka](#)

Okay, so maybe the "heavens opening" and the "spirit-like-a-dove" pieces are still a bit cryptic... but a voice from heaven, that's like the platonic ideal of clarity!

And listen to what it says: "You are my Beloved, my Own. On you, my favor rests."

This one is "of me," that's the meaning of the Greek idiom, "Son of mine." *You are my off-spring, made in my likeness, who I am is who you are. You are my beloved, and I am so pleased with you.*

In this moment, when Jesus laid everything on the line, when he stepped into the water of life, he heard the voice of God confirming his identity, approving his being, reminding him of who he is and where he came from.

"You are my Beloved, my Own. On you, my favor rests."

What do you hear when you step into the water of life? In those life-defining moments--ready or not, big or small, chosen or forced upon you--in those moments when you are up to your neck in the waters of life, what voice do you hear?



Do you hear the voice of God, the very source of all that is, resonating within you: "You are my Beloved: who I am is who you are. And I am so pleased with you."

That voice of God was not speaking only to Jesus, but to all of us.

I know that can get lost in translation and theological complications... but that's the core of Jesus' life and teachings: you are all God's Beloved.

This is what Jesus meant [when he said that](#) "I am the Vine and you are the Branches."

This is what he was talking about [when he promised](#) that his Spirit, God's Spirit, would live in us and among us.

This is what he meant [when he promised](#) that one day his disciples would understand that "I am in my Creator, and you in me, and I in you."

This is why his followers called themselves "[little Christs](#)," "[the Body of Christ](#)," "[the Children of God](#)," [adopted into God's family](#).

That's how Jesus' disciple, John [summarized his message](#): "*Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.*"

You, as you are, are born of God. You are God's Beloved, in whom God is well pleased.

Full Stop.

Now, I know:

- Some of us are wondering how that can be true, when we haven't done anything to deserve God's love, surely there's some measure of success we need to measure up to before we earn that kind of love.

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- Some of us think that sounds great, but how can we know for *sure* that it's true? Maybe we should make a back-up plan just in case this isn't reliable. Or at least stick close to the preacher because he sounds so confident about this, if he believes it then that will have to be good enough for me, too.
 - Some of us would rather believe that we don't actually need God's love--I mean of course we do, but realistically we can get by just fine on our own, we're already doing it, thank you very much.
 - Some of us just trust this naturally, we feel it in our gut, so much that we want to just cozy up in it like a comfy couch, let's just hang out here for a while--I mean, we could do all kinds of stuff with love like this, but why risk the waters of life when it feels so nice right here on the beach?
 - Some of us are still thinking about it, we'll need to analyze this proposition for logical fallacies, play it out to its deepest conclusions. When we fully understand this, then we can accept it, but until then let's just keep it distant, keep it hypothetical.
 - And some of us feel that this sounds exactly like what we've been longing to hear, but it almost feels too good to be true? Surely this *can't* be true of *everyone*. We feel like we need to prove that we are unique and special in order to warrant God's love.
 - Some of us think that this kind of love is possible, but, come on, realistically we're not quite there yet. Just a few more things we need to take care of, a couple of projects we're working on, and then we'll be good enough for this.
 - Some of us think this sounds great! Of course this is how life is meant to be! ...but let's not sit with it too long because it would be awfully painful if it turned out not to be true. And anyway, I have big plans for this afternoon!
 - And many of us want to believe this, but surely this love is meant to be shared. Great love comes with great responsibility, we need to show this love by serving others. I mean, if we don't show our love by working for others then what use are we? How can we feel God's love if we can't earn it by serving?

Most of us are highly skilled at deflecting this message that you are God's Beloved. (I listed, what was it... 9! different ways to doubt that this is who you are--you [Enneagram](#) fans know what I'm talking about...)

But I'm not in your head or your heart, maybe you have different voices and feelings warning you not to trust this.

And that's okay, you're not alone in your skepticism. Even Jesus heard those thoughts and voices of doubt. Right after this proclamation at his baptism, Jesus went out into the wilderness in a season of temptations and struggles, facing the darkness that tried to convince him to abandon his calling.

I don't suppose any of us will ever be entirely free from the voices that tell us not to trust it, that God's love is conditional, that we'll never measure up,

But that's the function of baptism, one of the big ones, to serve as a permanent reminder of at least one day when we heard the voice of God, when we believed what it said about who we are. Not perfectly, of course, but enough to choose to be baptized. Enough to stand, or kneel, in front of our friends and family and let the pastor push us down into the water, or at least pour lukewarm-to-cold water over our heads. :)



On that day--on *this* day--we choose to trust.

And not alone, never alone. On this day we gave and received the pledge of communion with the church of Jesus Christ. We are part of the whole body of those who choose, at least some of the time, to believe that God so loved the world, all of us, each of us.

This is where we belong. This is where we find and make meaning, where we find and give purpose.

This is where we remind one another of what is often easier to see in someone else than in ourselves, that we are truly who God says we are.

Today we celebrate the ritual of baptism with David, and we welcome other new members through transfer from other churches. And these ceremonies represent a lot of different things, depending on where you're standing and where you're coming from, meanings that will no doubt grow and change with time

Underneath all of that, I hope that today will be one brief window of time when you see the heavens opened, and the presence of God made manifest among us.

And even though only one of us is going to have the waters of baptism poured on his head this morning, know that this message is meant for each of you as well.

I don't know what riverbank you are standing on this morning. I don't know whether the water looks calm and inviting, or strong and wild.



Sometimes we choose the water, and sometimes the water chooses us. So when you do pass through the water, by choice or because the waves break over you unbidden, may you know that this is the way into God's Presence. May you hear the ancient voice, the source of all that is, resonating within you, declaring about *you*: This is my child, my beautiful creation. This one is My Beloved.

And that, as the poet Jan Richardson writes, is where we begin:

[Beloved Is Where We Begin](#)

*If you would enter
into the wilderness,
do not begin
without a blessing.
Do not leave
without hearing
who you are:
Beloved,
named by the One
who has traveled this path
before you.
Do not go
without letting it echo
in your ears,
and if you find
it is hard
to let it into your heart,
do not despair.
That is what
this journey is for.
I cannot promise
this blessing will free you
from danger,
from fear,
from hunger
or thirst,
from the scorching
of sun
or the fall
of the night.*

*But I can tell you
that on this path
there will be help.
I can tell you
that on this way
there will be rest.
I can tell you
that you will know
the strange graces
that come to our aid
only on a road
such as this,
that fly to meet us
bearing comfort
and strength,
that come alongside us
for no other cause
than to lean themselves
toward our ear
and with their
curious insistence
whisper our name:
Beloved.
Beloved.
Beloved.*

—Jan Richardson from [Circle of Grace](#)
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Song of Response // [Come, Thou Fount](#) // Hymnal: A Worship Book #521

Baptism and Membership Ritual // Eileen Klaassen

BAPTISM

Statement of Purpose

The sacrament of baptism proclaims and celebrates the grace of God.

By water and the Spirit,
we are called, claimed, and commissioned:
we are called God's own,
welcomed as children of God;
we are claimed by Christ,
united with Christ,
united with one another and the Christian community
of every time and place;
we are commissioned to Christ's ministry
of love, peace, and justice,
and strengthened by the Holy Spirit
for the work of the church in the world.

Scripture Reading: Genesis 9:12-16a,17

God said [to Noah and his family], "Here is the sign of the covenant between me and you and every living creature for ageless generations: I set my bow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth, my bow will appear in the clouds. Then I will remember the covenant that is between me and you and every kind of living creature, and never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all flesh. Whenever my bow appears in the clouds I will see it, and remember that..." "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all living things on the earth."

And a sign of the covenant between you and God, David.

Presentation of Candidates

On behalf of the congregation of Wildwood Mennonite Church,
I present David Schwinghamer
for initiation into the body of Christ through baptism.



Profession of Faith and Promises

A. *Profession of Faith in The Triune God*

Do you believe in God, Source of love;
in Jesus Christ, love incarnate;
and in the Holy Spirit, love's power.

I do, by the grace of God.

B. *Commitment to Seek Justice and Resist Evil*

Desiring the freedom of new life in Christ,
do you seek to resist evil, and to live in love and justice,
witnessing to God's love for all creation?

I will, God being my helper.

C. *Commitment to Follow the Way of Jesus Christ*

Will you follow the way of Jesus Christ?

I will, God being my helper.

D. *Commitment to the Mission and Ministry of the Church*

Will you join
with your brothers and sisters in this congregation
to share in the life, work, and ministry of Jesus Christ,
loving and serving others?

I will, God being my helper.

Congregational Commitment

Let us pledge to David our support and care.

**As a baptized and baptizing people,
we commit ourselves to support and uphold you
within the community of faith.**

**May God grant us all
the grace to live out our baptism.**

Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and the Pouring of Water

Gracious and Holy God,
we bless you for the gift of life,
and, within it, the gift of water.

Over its unshaped promise your Spirit hovered at creation.

By water, the rainbow was formed, reminding us that you have made a covenant with us,
Through water, you led the children of Israel to freedom.



In the waters of the Jordan your our Lord Jesus was baptized.
Now may your Spirit be upon us and what we do,
that this water may be a sign of new identity in you,
a sign for all of new life in Christ,
in whose name we pray.

Amen.

The Act of Baptism:

David kneels.

The presider pours water generously on the candidate's head, while saying the following.

David Schwinghamer,
I baptize you,
in the name of God, the Creator,
of Jesus, our Redeemer,
and of the Holy Spirit, our Sustainer.
Amen.

Blessing

May the blessing of God,
Mother and Father of us all,
be with you today and always.

Amen.

David, may the Holy Spirit, Love's power,
guide you, inspire you, and work within you,
all the days of your life.

Amen.

WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS

Statement of Purpose

New members are invited to come forward to face the congregation.

Scripture reading: *John 15:5, 7, 10, 11*

I am the vine;
you are the branches.
those who live in me and I in them
will bear abundant fruit,
for apart from me you can do nothing.



If you live on in me,
and my words live on in you,
ask whatever you want
and it will be done for you.
I tell you all this that my joy may be yours,
and your joy may be complete.
This is my commandment:
love one another as I have loved you.

The church is a community of people with varied gifts,
united by the Holy Spirit.
We gather to celebrate God's presence,
to discern God's truth,
and to follow the way of Jesus.
By our baptism we are made members of Christ's church.
We exercise this membership
in the denomination to which we belong,
which for us is Mennonite Church Canada,
and within the context of a local community of faith.
We will now welcome into this congregation
those who are already members
of the church of Jesus Christ.

Presentation

On behalf of the Wildwood Mennonite congregation,
I present the following persons
whom we welcome into the membership
of this community of faith:
David Schinghamer, Kara Wolfe, Peter Lippman,
Sean Baergen, and Eileen Klaassen

Commitment of New Members

David, Kara, Peter, Sean, and Eileen
will you join with us
as together we celebrate God's presence,
live with respect in creation,
love and serve others,
seek justice and resist evil?
We will, with God's help.

Congregational Commitment

The people may stand and pledge their support with words such as the following.

Dear friends in Christ,
let us pledge to these persons our support and care.

**As your family in Christ,
we rejoice in the gifts you bring to us.
We pledge to you our love and our support.
With God's help, we will together live out
the mission and ministry of Christ's church.**

Welcome

In the name of Jesus Christ,
we welcome you to the privileges and responsibilities
of membership in this congregation.
We give thanks to God for your witness among us.

Blessing and Sending Forth

The grace of Christ attend you,
the love of God surround you,
the Holy Spirit keep you.
Amen.

Congregational Commitment

One: Let us pledge to David our support and care.

**All: As a baptized and baptizing people,
we commit ourselves to support and uphold you
within the community of faith.
May God grant us all
the grace to live out our baptism.
Amen.**

Congregational Commitment

One: Dear friends in Christ,
let us pledge to these persons our support and care.

**All: As your family in Christ,
we rejoice in the gifts you bring to us.
We pledge to you our love and our support.
With God's help, we will together live out
the mission and ministry of Christ's church.**



Congregational Prayer // Eileen Klaassen

O God, Ruler of the Universe,
You have plans for all of creation and you have plans for the earth on which we live.
As we aim to live within your will, and as we strive to bring about your kingdom on earth,
We are grateful for the church in which we can discern with other Christ-followers
How we are to live in this world;
How we as a human association can organize around
what we believe is an alternative vision for the flourishing of all —
your shalom vision for right relations between us and you,
between us and others, between us and creation.

Though you, O God, our Creator, are all around us, and we can worship you anywhere,
we are grateful for this church,
a community of brothers and sisters who belong to each other as a body.
Help us to remember, that every part is important,
that every part (maybe even the parts we find hard to accept) -
every part serves, cares for and connects to the whole.

In these hard times, as we hunger for hospitality and love, sanctuary and rest,
As we long for true enduring friendships,
we recognize how much we depend on the church to sustain us.
And though at times it fails us,
it is still one of those places where we can count on the church being a true friend, present,
listening, giving us room where we need it and not leaving us alone.

We pray that as a church,
We can recognize how much we need each other
and the accountability that we receive from them to walk in step with your vision.
We pray that we can see ourselves joining with other people of faith
knowing that we are baptized into the river of life and into your service,

This morning we remember other congregations within the larger church;
Particularly within Mennonite Church Saskatchewan,
And we pray especially for Peace Mennonite in Regina who are working
to bring two different refugee families from Africa - a process complicated by the pandemic.
We pray also for those who are in vulnerable child caregiving positions in various agencies,
And we pray for wisdom in our prison & CoSA ministries -
for persons who are more isolated due to pandemic limitations.

We pray also for our own refugee family –
the family we are sponsoring together with Osler Mennonite -



For Lina Alnouri and her family whom we are hoping will arrive soon.

May they travel well, arrive safely, and may they find a warm welcome here in their new land.

We are also well aware that our neighbours to the south are much in need of our prayers.
We pray that all may be able to exercise their right to vote,
And that your way may be followed in their land.

And within our land, in our church community
we remember those who struggle with illness and with health decisions,
those who might put off seeking medical attention for fear of needing care in an unsafe
situation,
For those who may be nearing the end of their lives.

We pray again for Doris and Don, for Ben and Russell and April,
And for the friends seeking to uphold them in challenging times.
We pray for those concerned about family members who need to offer support from a
distance;
Those who are too far away to visit.
We remember those whose families are too stressed and too busy
to pay close attention to those whom they would have supported before the pandemic hit.
We pray for those whose stress is causing them to act out
and make life difficult for the people around them.
And few pray for all who are feeling like this pandemic is definitely getting to be a drag.

We are ever so grateful where healing has taken place,
Whether of body, mind, or spirit.

Compassionate and merciful God,
We are a broken people, yet also beautiful people.
We thank you that we are loved as the world is loved.
Help us to remember that even the tallest oak tree in the forest
Was once a small nut that held its ground.
And help us remember always that we are a people of hope,
Surrounded by people of hope,
And we are, all of us, held in the palm of your hand.
Amen.

Song // *The Peace of the Earth* // Sing the Journey #77





Benediction // An Odd Mob

Loving God, we are an odd mob.

We thank You for the widely different types of people,
and expressions of faith,
which constitute the membership of your Church.

We give thanks for those who appear born to express faith
through rigid creeds and behaviour.

We give thanks for others who seem destined to follow Christ
among innumerable questions and doubts.

We give thanks for members whose faith appears to be
a profound, childlike simplicity, unhurried and unworried.

We give thanks for those who seem unable to find one satisfying word
with which to describe You,
yet whose faith is constantly renewed by a wordless awe
in the presence of Unnameable Love.

Lover of diversity, God of all souls,
continue to give us the grace to treasure each other with all our oddness
and to use our differences and gifts to grow as a community of grace, joy, and peace.

Amen.

-Bruce Prewer