

**Sunday June 28, 2020**  
**Year A, Pentecost 4**  
**Text: Jeremiah 28:5-9**  
**“A Peace of the Prophets”**  
© Rev. Elise Feltrin  
**St. Andrews United Church, Bayfield**

**Opening Hymn: I Feel the Winds of God Today, VU 625**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B\\_xNRKvurxA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_xNRKvurxA)

**Welcome:**

We continue journeying into this season of Pentecost – a season of God’s Spirit arriving as wind, as fire, as mystery!

Blowing, igniting and transforming the world.

And so as we come together in worship, motivated by the Spirit to join in this virtual space – approaching with curiosity, with hesitancy, with wonder...we light a candle to join us with one another.

{LIGHT CANDLE}

This candle dances with the presence of the Spirit, reminding us of the warmth of the community in which God calls us to gather and the light that shines with wisdom, insight, and clarity for us in our time of worship.

(Written by Peter Chynoweth, from Gathering Pentecost 1, 2020 Year A, p. 33 Used with Permission)

**Call to Worship:**

(Written by Allison Abbott-Wiebe, from Gathering Pentecost 1, 2020 Year A, p. 33 Used with Permission)

All God’s children are welcome and wanted here, no matter your need.

God will give you rest from your weariness,

comfort from your pain,

balm for your soul, food for your mind,

and hope for your tomorrow.

God’s ability to tend and nurture, calm and inspire,

knows no bounds and never ends.

Let us open our hearts and minds

to God’s loving-kindness and welcome.

Let us **be** God’s loving-kindness and welcome

for each other as we worship together.

**Opening Prayer:**

(Written by Ryan McNally, from Gathering Pentecost 1, 2020 Year A, p. 37 Used with Permission)

Gracious God, who creates, sustains, and redeems all life,

we come seeking your disturbing presence and comforting peace.

We praise you for the joy of being your people.

May your Spirit be with us and move within us, in this time of worship.

Give us hearts that hear your Word

and minds that are open to the transforming power of your love. Amen.

Please join in singing VU 238 How Great Thou Art

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXQpDDcrN-w>

### **Wisdom Stories: Jeremiah 28:5-9 (Good News Translation)**

Then in the presence of the priests and of all the people who were standing in the Temple, I said to Hananiah, “Wonderful! I hope the Lord will do this! I certainly hope God will make your prophecy come true and will bring back from Babylonia all the Temple treasures and all the people who were taken away as prisoners. But listen to what I say to you and to the people. The prophets who spoke long ago, before my time and yours, predicted that war, starvation, and disease would come to many nations and powerful kingdoms. But a prophet who predicts peace can only be recognized as a prophet whom the Lord has truly sent when that prophet's predictions come true.”

*Let us give thanks for the wisdom and truth we find in these words....as written by humans...inspired by God....Amen.*

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### **Reflection: “A Peace of the Prophets”**

Over the course of our church year, we hear a wide range of scripture stories in our lectionary readings...

....some are familiar and beloved and easy to understand – even if you’ve never gone to church a day in your life, you can still get the point of most parables!

For example, the story of the Good Samaritan resonates with people of all cultures and generations as an example of how to love our neighbour.

Then there are those lesser known readings, sometimes disturbing, sometimes challenging, sometimes just plain odd.. that require a bit more interpretation.

Today we come across one such little snippet from the book of Jeremiah. The short bit of text in our reading doesn’t quite convey the whole story of what’s going on...so let’s start by setting it in context;

The prophet Jeremiah lived just north of Jerusalem in the 6<sup>th</sup> century before the Common Era – in a time when the region of Judah (the northern half of Israel) was desperately trying to free itself from the grasp of Babylonian conquest.

Reportedly descended from a long line of Temple priests, Jeremiah dutifully and continually preached to the Judean people, that they must return to their covenant roots with God.

He used images of marital infidelity to chide them for their unfaithfulness and continually warned them of God’s impending judgment.

Needless to say, Jeremiah was not really a popular guy.

But he had a lot to say – dictating to scribes over 50 chapters worth of prose and poetry which are included in the older testament.

Jeremiah was God’s fierce and faithful messenger, but for the most part in his day, he was ignored and persecuted – at one point even completely banned from speaking in public!

Although well-intentioned, he went to extremes - and could even be accused of being melodramatic.

In the previous chapter leading up to today’s verses, Jeremiah, inspired by the Word of God, has created for himself a makeshift yoke – out of leather straps and iron bars – which he puts around his own neck to symbolize being under the yoke of Babylonian rule.

God has promised Jeremiah and tasked him with telling the people, that submitting to this rule, will eventually set them free – that if they serve the king of Babylon, they will live. And their precious treasures and holy vessels from the Temple, which have been plundered, will be returned.

It's obviously not a message the people want to hear.

They do not want to submit to foreign rule.

They do not want to be under the control of some other nation's king.

They want their old life back, and they want it back now.

To heck with the doomsday warnings and dire predictions of this naysaying Jeremiah!

Along comes another prophet, named Hananiah.

Who offers a very different, contradictory message, which he also claims comes directly from God.

Hananiah paints a rosy picture of the future – that within two years the king of Babylon will be booted out, their Temple treasures will be restored and everything will be just hunky dory.

Hooray Hananiah! Who *doesn't* want to hear this great news?

Including Jeremiah...who responds in today's verses... in the presence of the priests and of all the people who were standing in the Temple, saying to Hananiah:

*"Wonderful! I hope the Lord will do this! I certainly hope God will make your prophecy come true and will bring back from Babylonia all the Temple treasures and all the people who were taken away as prisoners.*

*But.... listen to what I say to you and to the people.*

*The prophets who spoke long ago, before my time and yours, predicted that war, starvation, and disease would come to many nations and powerful kingdoms. But a prophet who predicts peace can only be recognized as a prophet whom the Lord has truly sent when that prophet's predictions come true."*

In other words; the prophecy proof is in the pudding.

Prophets are often not recognized in the present...but only in hindsight after what they have predicted has come to pass.

And as history would show in ancient Judea, just a few years later, the entire temple was actually destroyed, and almost the entire population was exiled to Babylon where they remained for generations to come.

Hananiah's 'good news' two year prediction of peace and restoration fell flat. While it sounded great at the time, offering hope and energizing the people, this false prophet just didn't speak the truth.

Jeremiah, on the other hand, bluntly does...even though he knows, the truth often hurts.

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I wonder if you recognize the name Li Wenliang?

He has been called a hero, a whistleblower; he was a husband and father; he was a communist, a doctor...and I would add, a prophet.

Back in December 2019, Dr. Li recognized a dangerously contagious SARS-like virus was spreading in his hometown of Wuhan.

With great urgency, he posted warnings on social media to his medical colleagues, alerting them to take precautions and inform their family and relatives to be on guard against this deadly new corona virus.

While those who knew him well and trusted his judgment stocked up on surgical masks and protective gear, the government swooped in to silence him.

He was accused of spreading false rumours and asked to acknowledge his fault and recant his message. But in defiance, Dr. Li continued to disobey a political system that does not tolerate dissent.

In January, Dr. Li contracted the virus himself – but even this did not prevent him from speaking out.

From his hospital bed, he texted interviews, saying if there had been more openness and transparency from the start, many lives could have been saved.

He wanted to recuperate so that he could continue treating patients and spreading the word about the spread of the virus.

Unfortunately, Dr. Li, succumbed to COVID-19 in early February – at the age of 34, leaving behind a wife, a 5 year old child and an unborn baby who was due this month.

This hero, this prophet, was widely mourned on social media – eventually, he was exonerated and the government solemnly apologized to his family.

A fellow doctor, who never knew Li Wenliang personally, commented after his death: “All I know is that he spoke the truth and said things many people wouldn’t dare to.”<sup>1</sup>

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The truly prophetic voice takes courage.

The truly prophetic voice, is not popular.

The truly prophetic voice tells us things we don’t want to hear, rather than saying things to please us.

Quick fixes and rosy predictions aren’t always the best news.

As we continue to struggle globally against COVID-19, who are the false prophets, and who are the truth tellers?

Do we really think the worst is over?

Do we really think we’re on the road to recovery?

Do we really think that society and our economy will emerge unscathed?

Disillusionment is actually worse than suffering.

And false hope, is worse than no hope at all.

As the prophet Jeremiah urges the Judean people to accept their new reality and learn to live with it...we too can take a lesson from this.

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<sup>1</sup> Time.com article by Hillary Leung, February 7, 2020

Although our current situation isn't what anyone wants, it is our new reality.  
And to survive, and to thrive, we need to adapt.

It takes courage and faith;  
It requires wisdom and prayerful discernment to ignore those voices telling us what we might WANT to hear.

The truth can not only hurt, it can be downright ugly.  
We want to avert our eyes – stop up our ears in denial. Turn off the News and reject the images that sully our rose-coloured glasses.  
But when the future looks bleak, Jeremiah reminds us of God's eternal promise to see us through both the good times and the bad.  
As contemporary theologian Walter Brueggemann points out: "The only antidote for denial, is radical truth telling – we cannot proclaim peace, at the cost of truth and justice."

Time will tell, and history will reveal, which are the prophetic and truth telling voices today....is it the scientists? The medical workers? The politicians? The economists?

May God's spirit help us to listen mindfully, with careful ears, with prayerful hearts....that we hear and respond to their truths.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

**Pastoral Prayer:**

Loving God, we are surrounded by prophetic voices – exposing injustice – revealing wisdom – uplifting truth.

Voices proclaiming .... Our planet is in crisis...

Our systems are oppressive.... Our priorities are skewed.

Brave truth tellers risk their lives, their jobs, their reputations to speak out against inequality and corruption, secrecy and abuse.

And yet we ignore, dismiss and silence them.

Help us to hear the stories of these messengers – to honour their experiences – without judgment.

To put ourselves in their shoes, with compassion and empathy.

And to be transformed by their words, that we may all work towards bringing about your peaceable kin-dom.

We continue to pray for all those worldwide, affected by COVID-19  
– whether physically, psychologically or economically.

Unblock the closed minds and hardened hearts of those who deny the destructive impact of this virus.

Help us all to understand the importance of our actions and precautions in helping to protect those who are most vulnerable among us.

De-centre our thinking so that our behaviour helps rather than harms others.

We pray for those in positions of leadership and authority – that they may exhibit patience and wisdom in their decision making and their actions...listening to the urgent voices of those whom they often seek to silence...

We give thanks for Dr. Li Wenliang and others who continue to serve, heal and research, often at the risk of their own lives.

We pray for those who are struggling with the loneliness of isolation....may we continue to reach out to one another in new and creative ways to form bridges of caring and connection....

For all those marking milestones....of graduations...anniversaries...and other rites of passage....may their celebrations be safe, satisfying and memorable....

We give thanks with gratitude for the many often unnoticed blessings in our lives...which we now silently ponder....

And we lay before you the personal concerns that weigh heavy on our hearts...

Knowing that you always share in our burdens and rejoice in our delights,

We lift our prayers to you as have faithful followers through the ages and across the generations who have prayed to you as....

..... a loving Mother & Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kin-dom 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 kin-dom the power and the glory, forever and ever, amen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2svZhZT6Pro>

Make Me A Channel of Your Peace: VU 684

### **Offertory:**

Prophets offer words and wisdom;

We offer gifts and resources...

And in sharing, we are all blessed!

For those who wish to contribute to the ongoing ministry of St. Andrews United in Bayfield, including the M & S Fund, I encourage you to click on the 'Donate' button on our webpage which will take you to Canada helps.org when secure online charitable donations may be made.

For those who continue to support the work of our church through their PAR offerings, and regular envelopes – we express our appreciation. Cheques may be made out to St. Andrews United and mailed to PO Box 202, Bayfield N0M 1G0.

### **Offering Prayer:**

Dear God, in humility we ask that you accept these gifts as a sign of our love for all of your children. May these gifts help to provide healing in the midst of adversity within the community of your creation. Make us ever mindful of your call through prophetic voices to bring love, hope, and peace in the world. In Christ's name, we ask for your blessing, even as we seek to follow his example in denying ourselves and following you. For this, we give you thanks. Amen.

### **Announcement:**

July 1 is coming fast! And while we won't be sharing together in a BBQ beef supper this year, We hope you are able to somehow have an Isolation Celebration that is safe and fun: If you haven't already, please make a donation to this important annual fundraiser of ST. Andrews! Happy Canada Day!!

Survey: Your Council is gathering opinions and information that will affect the Future & Visioning of St. Andrews – trying to determine priorities for calling a new minister – see Friday newsletter – every voice matters! Please respond by noon on Monday

**Benediction:**

(Written by Fern Gibbard, from Gathering Pentecost 1, 2020 Year A, p. 39 Used with Permission)

Go out in Jesus' name with ready hands and a willing spirit  
to bring God's kin-dom into this world.

Go out to bring love, justice and peace  
into a world of conflict, hurt and pain,  
knowing that God is with us always. Amen.

***Adapted from Fern Gibbard, Penticton U.C., Penticton, B.C***

**May we go out marching in the light of God!**

**Siyahamba! VU 646**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fi-zd2k8wgQ>