

**January 30, 2011 Year A Worship Service**     *prepared by Bev Brazier,*  
*Whitehorse*

Call to Worship

One: God be with you

All: **And also with you**

One: Lift up your hearts

All: **We lift them up to God**

One: Let us give thanks to God

All: **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

One: What is it that God requires of us?

All: **God has shown us what is right: to do justice, love kindness, and to walk humbly with God.**

One: Then let us walk in the Light of God. Let's pray together.

Prayer:

God, you HAVE shown us what is right. We come together today, needing to hear the call once again; to see the vision anew; to feel the stirrings of your Spirit in our lives. In the silence, in the music, in the words, and in the friendship of this hour bring us into your justice, kindness and humble walk with you. We pray in Jesus' name – amen

Hymn 232 VU Joyful Joyful

Prayer of Confession:

One: God, we lift before you the ways in which we have not lived your vision of justice. Our world and our lives ache for want of justice. (silence) God, forgive us

All: **and teach us to do justice.**

One: God, we lift before you the ways in which we have not lived your vision of kindness. Our world and our lives reach out for kindness when it seems hard to find. (silence) God, forgive us

All: **and teach us to love kindness**

One: God, we lift before you the ways in which we have not lived your vision of your world, walking humbly with you. We stumble, and sometimes we fall, when we forget to live this vision. (silence) God, forgive us.

All: **and teach us to walk humbly with you.**

One: As a society, as a church, and as individuals, we ask your forgiveness. We ask you to turn us once again to your covenant love (silence) We do so trusting in your loving kindness – Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Listen there is good news. God loves you very much, and no matter what. God is always there for you: loving, calling, forgiving and giving you just what you need right now, to be God's loving and joyful and faithful people. So it is that I can assure you, our sins are forgiven and there is hope. And thanks be to God!

A sung response such as the Gloria or We are marching in the Light of God

Children's time if there is one in your church.

Play a matching game with them and the adults too. Take the beatitudes, and write them out in two parts: For example on one piece of paper write "Blessed are the poor in spirit" and on another paper write the last half "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" Do the same for all the beatitudes. Hand them out, some to kids, some to adults, and then have them find each other and match them up; then read them out all together.

Scriptures:

Micah 6: 1-8; Psalm 15 (VU pg 736); 1 Corinthians 1: 18-31; Matthew 5: 1-12

Reflection     *based on Micah 6: 6-8*

The Bible speaks - there is no question about that. It has quite a repertoire of voices, don't you find? And tones?

There are some passages of scripture that simply sing....other that wail, still others that shout, some even that whoop cheer and stomp their feet.

This one, it seems to me, whispers. Whispers in ... in a *stage* whisper, meant for everyone to hear.

Whispers....like a parent prompting a four year old who has memorized her part in the play and then freezes in front of the audience. You know that scene...the child knows it by heart...has gone over and over and over the lines, and yet, when it counts...when grandma is right there in the front row.....nothing. And the parent whispers the lines ...mouthing them with that "you can do it" look in their eyes...that's what this text feels like to me. Whispering because it's telling us what we already know...whispering so we won't feel embarrassed for having forgotten AGAIN.

Whispering the lines *with* us, willing us to remember and join in.

(whispering, parental tone) "God has told you what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? Come on...you know!" And we *do* know. And sometimes - like 4 year olds before the audience of relatives - we freeze, and we forget, and we turn and hit our sister because we don't know what else to do.

Yes, this text whispers.

Whispers like the parent with a teenager in the kitchen, one in the morning...home late after sneaking out even though they've been grounded. There have been words like "After all I've done for you"

And "we talked about this a thousand times and you agreed you'd not do that again" and in response "You're trying to ruin my life, mom, you're not fair dad - what do you WANT from me?" and the sound of adolescent feet stomping up the stairs

And the aching, tired, verge-of-tears whispered response to the retreating cloud of indignant hormones "you know what I want. All I've ever wanted for you. Be kind, do what's right, and ....let me love you."

This text whispers.

Whispers too like that same parent, standing with the child years before, when loving was easy and natural, crouching down, pointing to the two year old, his first year to really be aware, pointing as the Christmas tree lights are turned on for the first time. “Look” the parent says “Look! Isn’t it wonderful? Look there – and there!”

A breathy call to wonder. A gentle voice saying look, there’s more – there is so much more. Let me show you how holy, how sparkling, how incredible the world can be. Look and then look again! There is so much more to – to all of this life – than we’ve even begun to imagine.

A whisper like that. Go deep, it says. Go deep. Don’t settle for the surface. There is wonder, there is depth, there is more going on than we can see or know.

Justice, not merely in the courtroom setting – certainly that though, and beyond that, the Biblical notion of justice as right relationship, fairness, respect and dignity in the way creation exists together. Starting with an attitude of the heart, a desire for things to be – right. Fair. Justice that flows like a mighty river, as Amos the prophet says...and washes clean all the ways this world is twisted away from the truth.

Mercy. The Hebrew word is “hesed” with a harsh “ch” at the end I’m told. It comes from a deep place, even physically. “Hesed” Mercy. Loving kindness -mercy at the places we’re most vulnerable. Not sympathy, or a kindness that touches only the mind, an idea of the other, the one suffering, that can be sated by a donation to a cause. Mercy that wrenches the heart and demands a response of the soul. Mercy. Loving kindness. Hesed.

And walking humbly with God. Humble. Humility. I love that word...its root is in the word for earth. The word that means earth, humus...is the root word for human...to be human is to be of the earth...humility means to be one with the earth, to remember we are earth creatures, rooted and grounded quite literally in and on this little planet our home. Dependent for our very existence on six inches of top soil and a season and the fact that it rains. One with all the other living things in our frightening and glorious vulnerability. Walking humbly with God.

I invite you to look deeply into yourself.... There is so much more to see! Justice. Mercy. Humbly walking with your creator – these things surpass all other calls from the creator. They fly in the face of any who would claim some kind of hierarchy in the eyes of God...these gifts, these voices, these are for all living things. Justice. Mercy. Humble walking with God. The whispering voices of these things say “here is a place upon which to build your relationships with other religions, with other cultures, with life forms not your own...with the earth itself”. There is so much more than we know, the painting says. The scripture whispers.

There is so much more. Micah paints with words a picture of human life going on, above and over it all, the place where God dwells, if we only took time to look. In Micah the scene is a courtroom, above the daily round. We, busy living our lives, and something else, something divine happening and we don’t know it; we haven’t taken the time to

look. The scriptures whisper – look! Listen – if you think this is all that’s real...you’re just not paying attention! look! Look! There’s a whole world of reality that, if we took time to ground ourselves and quiet ourselves ...would become clear - and who knows what would happen then?

Justice, mercy and walking humbly. These things, in the end, are our lifeline and our future. They begin and end in the heart of God. These are the very nature of the Divine. They are our heritage, our legacy, our home.

They whisper today a message of hope and unity –  
May we listen and look well.  
And All God’s people said - AMEN!

### Offering

Dedication Prayer:

For all your gifts, we give you thanks and praise. In response, we give you the only thing we can; we give ourselves. Take us, take our offerings as symbol of our deep desire to live in justice kindness and humble walking with you. Bless and our offerings, and use us to bless others. We pray in Jesus’ name – Amen

Hymn – What Does the Lord Require of You VU 701

Prayers of the People – use prayer A on pg 912 and 913 VU

Hymn – For the Healing of the Nations 678 VU

### Commissioning and Benediction:

Go now to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God. Go in peace to love and serve the world God loves so much; go in joy to serve God always. Amen