



Pembina Parish Summer at Home Worship Guide – 2021

Greetings all! With the pandemic still doing its best to keep us on our toes and distant from one another, I hope this Summer worship guide will be one way to stay connected to God and Pembina Parish. Knowing that this Summer will still not be quite what we would like it to be, we are shaping our worship using “Great and Small” A Guide to the Most Okayest Summer Ever!* We hope this is a playful way for us to continue to be shaped through worship during the Summer months. You will notice that July 18 and 25 have only a Psalm for reflection. I (Rev. Carrie) will be on holidays for those weeks, so I do not have worship materials created for those weeks.

*All resources in this guide are adapted from “Great and Small” Guide to the Most Okayest Summer Ever by the SALT project and are used with permission.

Week 1 - July 4

Connect

To each other – connect with someone (friend, family member, church member) and share your highs and lows from the past week. What has brought you joy, what has left you feeling sad or disheartened? Invite them to share as well. If they wonder why you're doing this, tell them your minister told you to!

To God – take a few slow breaths and quiet yourself in the presence of our Creating God. Appreciate the grandeur of creation by imagining yourself sitting underneath a huge starry sky – sense your “smallness.” Then imagine yourself atop a majestic mountain – sense your “greatness.” Give thanks for all that is great and small in this created world, yourself included.

To the Bible – Read Genesis 3:19 and Psalm 8

Encounter

In an ancient Jewish (Hasidic) tale: every person should have two pockets, with a scrap of paper in each. One scrap should read, “I am but dust and ashes,” from the Book of Genesis. And the other should read, “For my sake was the world created,” a line from the Talmud. Whenever we feel too proud, the rabbis taught, we should read the first; whenever we feel discouraged, we should read the second.

Are “great” and “small” mutually exclusive? How can we be both?

Most of us understand the need for regular encouragement. Why and when is the opposite - to be taken down a notch - important? Who decides when we need it and how to give it? Are there people in your life that you trust enough to give you constructive criticism? Who are your encouragers?

Explore

If you are able to get out into nature this week, take a walk and notice the largeness and the smallness of God's creation. You might even sit beneath the starry sky.

OR

Take two slips of paper and write a note to yourself for when you are feeling superior and need to remember you are dust, and for when you are feeling down and need to remember how very special you are.

Blessing

As you go about your week, remember that you are both dust and majesty. May you recall your unique place in God's good creation and in the newness God is always creating through the Spirit in our midst. Amen.

Week 2 - July 11

Connect

To each other – connect with someone (friend, family member, church member) and share your highs and lows from the past week. What has brought you joy, what has left you feeling sad or disheartened? Invite them to share as well. If they wonder why you're doing this, tell them your minister told you to!

To God – Engage in the Christian practice of centering prayer. Begin by simply noticing your breath as you breathe in and out. Consider your breath as a gift from God. Then add a line of prayer to your inhale and exhale. On the inhale – “Creating God,” on the exhale – “I rest in you.” If your mind wanders, simply draw it back to your prayer words. Pray in this way as long as you wish.

To the Bible – Read Genesis 1 (or for tired people: Gen. 1:1-5 and Gen. 1:26-27)

Encounter

Throughout Genesis, whenever God creates a new thing, “God saw that it was good.” Which is to say, creation has always been a garden of delights, from the very beginning. Part of what God did in the beginning was to create contrast out of sameness; you can read Genesis as the story of the first flowering of diversity.

Notice the diversity and contrasts mentioned in the creation story. Sometimes we think of the contrasts as opposites. Try reading the text again seeing those contrasts as a spectrum. For example, God created Day and night, but also dawn, dusk and everything in between.

What do you think is missing from the world right now? If you could add something to creation or the way we live as God's creation, what would you add or change?

Explore

Take some time to sit in the dark and in the light. What gifts do each have to offer us? What about the in-between spaces of dawn, dusk, midday etc.?

OR

Spend time noticing the diversity of creation. The diversity of humans, of flowers and growing things, of climates and environments on the earth. Notice them and remind yourself of their goodness in God's eyes.

Blessing

May our Creating God bless you with knowledge of your goodness. May our sibling, Jesus Christ, guide you in thought, word, and deed. And may the Holy Spirit inspire your heart to sing the song God placed within you at your beginning. Amen.

Week 3 – July 18: Read and reflect on Psalm 19

Week 4 – July 25: Read and reflect on Psalm 121

Week 5 - August 1

Connect

To each other – connect with someone (friend, family member, church member) and share your highs and lows from the past week. What has brought you joy, what has left you feeling sad or disheartened? Invite them to share as well. If they wonder why you're doing this, tell them your minister told you to!

To God – Engage in the Christian practice of centering prayer. Begin by simply noticing your breath as you breathe in and out. Consider your breath as a gift from God. Then add a line of prayer to your inhale and exhale. On the inhale – “You knit me together,” on the exhale – “I am your child.” If your mind wanders, simply draw it back to your prayer words. Pray in this way as long as you wish.

To the Bible – Read Psalm 139

Encounter

We all have things that we wish were different about ourselves: our bodies, our personalities, our abilities, our habits, our tendencies. And though there are plenty of parts of the Bible that call us to change or improve, it's the clear witness of Scripture that each of us is wonderful, lovable, and beloved, exactly as we are right now.

When someone says to you, “God loves you just exactly as you are right now,” how does that make you feel? Is it easy or hard to believe? Why?

What's your favorite thing about yourself? What are you most proud of? Give thanks to God for your goodness. What do you like the least? What are you least proud of? Ask God to continue to shape you into who you were created to be and help you to accept yourself as God's beloved.

Explore

Take some time to tell family and friends what you love about them. You might say this to them directly or write them a card or a note. Remind them that they are loved by you and by God.

OR

God knit you together, created you with likes and passions. Celebrate God's good work in you by doing something you enjoy today whether it's going for a walk or bike ride, creating some art, sewing, chatting on the phone, watching a favourite movie, whatever brings you joy!

Blessing

May God open your heart to truly know and receive the depth of God's love and care for you. May that knowledge take root in you and cause you to grow and bear fruit, sharing God's love with others. Amen.

Week 6 - August 8

Connect

To each other – connect with someone (friend, family member, church member) and share your highs and lows from the past week. What has brought you joy, what has left you feeling sad or disheartened? Invite them to share as well. If they wonder why you're doing this, tell them your minister told you to!

To God – Pray the Lord's prayer daily. Consider what it might mean for heaven to be made real on earth.

To the Bible – Read Revelation 21:1-5

Encounter

So many of our solutions to life's problems are geographic: if we move to a new town, if we get a job in a new office, if we can just get away for awhile, then our problems will be solved. If we can just make it out of this vale of tears and up to heaven, we'll be set. But the Gospel's good news is that we don't need to head elsewhere for beauty or solutions to our problems. The solutions are already here, or if they're not, salvation is headed our way on the double. There's a discipline involved in learning to see heaven on earth, though. We have to practice looking for heaven breaking through. Once you get in the habit of noticing it, you'll start seeing it everywhere.

What are some things that would need to change around here for it to be more heavenly? What is already changing? What do you think is the role of human beings in bringing about heaven on earth?

Explore

Go for a walk or sit somewhere familiar in your home and look for heaven on earth. What appears or feels heavenly in what you see or hear? Another way to think about this is to look for goodness, kindness, love, and justice.

OR

Read an article or a book about someone who is doing good work to bring about God's kin-dom on earth. Perhaps this person is a prophet, drawing attention to injustice. Perhaps they are a peacemaker, bringing people together. Perhaps they have devoted their lives to healing in body, mind, or spirit. Or maybe they grow things or create art that brings light and life to our world.

Blessing

May you know that God is doing a new thing on this earth and in your own life. May you be reminded each day that God, our Creator, is always creating and recreating making all things new. In this, may you receive hope to live into Christ's kin-dom on earth. Amen.

Week 7 - August 15

Connect

To each other – connect with someone (friend, family member, church member) and share your highs and lows from the past week. What has brought you joy, what has left you feeling sad or disheartened? Invite them to share as well. If they wonder why you're doing this, tell them your minister told you to!

To God – Engage in a prayer of release. Place your hands, palms down, on your lap. Close them into fists as you name the things you carry that are sad and heavy, burdening your heart. When you have named them all. Open your hands and turn them palms up. Ask for God's strength to release these into God's care and the courage to trust that God is big enough to handle all our burdens and hold us with compassion.

To the Bible – Read Matthew 11: 28-30

Encounter

You probably already know that sabbath - intentional periods of rest - is both a commandment and a gift from God. You already know how important it is, too, so we'll save you the lecture. What's great in the verse from Matthew above is that Jesus doesn't just command or recommend rest; he actually offers it. And we can give each other rest too; if not by offering them a place to lay their heads, then at least by making space for each other's sabbath. And like the parent of a fractious toddler, we can point out - firmly - for each other when we need a nap.

Not everyone's idea of rest is sitting in a deck chair with a glass of iced tea; some people find house cleaning or gardening restful. Some kids get recharged by running around at top speed. Consider what rest means for you, rest for your body, rest for your mind, rest for your spirit. What gets in the way of sabbath for you?

Explore

Take some time to remember when you have felt most rested and renewed. When was it? What about that experience brought you rest for your weariness? Would it be possible to incorporate something of that experience into your life more often?

OR

Plan to do something restful or renewing, whatever that means for you. Set aside burdens and worries and enjoy God's commandment to rest and Jesus' invitation to take a load off.

Blessing

Jesus offers welcome to the weary and relief from burdens. Jesus invites us to rest in him. May you know the truth of that invitation and be granted the courage to rest, safe in the arms of the one who is our hope. Amen.

Week 8 - August 22

Connect

To each other – connect with someone (friend, family member, church member) and share your highs and lows from the past week. What has brought you joy, what has left you feeling sad or disheartened? Invite them to share as well. If they wonder why you're doing this, tell them your minister told you to!

To God – On the back of this page is a prayer labyrinth. Walking or tracing a prayer labyrinth is an ancient Christian practice. The centre of the labyrinth is the heart of God and the journey of tracing the labyrinth is meant to mirror our own spiritual journeys. Even though we might feel we are moving further away, we are always moving closer to the heart of God.

To the Bible – Read Matthew 2:1-12.

Encounter

They say the Magi followed a star to Jesus. If it was like other stars, it would only have been visible at night, when the sun was down. It probably would have been easier to travel in the daytime, but some lights are only visible when the brighter lights are out. Some sounds can only be heard when loud noises go quiet.

Lots of people must have seen the star that the Magi saw but didn't know what it was or what it meant. Have you ever seen something and understood what it meant in a way that others didn't? Have you ever felt "in the dark" when others seemed to know what was going on? How might this connect to the ideas of being both "great" and "small" that we explored earlier in Summer?

The Magi travelled a long way to reach the place where the child lay. What do you want so much that you'd travel a long way to get it?

Explore

The stars are out there in the sky all the time, not just at night. You just can't see them till the bright sun goes down. Spend some quiet night time, inside or out, with the lights off. What else becomes obvious in the dark that you don't notice during the day?

OR

Take time to reflect on the journey of your life thus far. Recall a time when you weren't sure exactly where you were going. What, or who, guided you? Did your life journey follow all the paths that you expected, or did God take you in directions that you would not have anticipated or even imagined?

Blessing

As you move into the final weeks of Summer and on into Fall, may God bless you with "stars" to guide you. And may you, like the Magi, be granted the glory of seeing Jesus face to face in this world as we will in the next; for each one of us is a bearer of the image of God. Amen.

Place your finger at the start of the labyrinth and begin to trace the path. As you trace, imagine traveling with the Magi. When you reach the centre, pause and rest as if beneath the Star over the place where Jesus lay. On your way out, imagine walking with Jesus as he grows.

