

# MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 1, 2019

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## "Peace in the Valley"

Based on Ephesians 2:14-22

It is said that when Rev. Langhill, a Scottish Presbyterian minister, arrived in this cowboy town called Vernon, one stormy, Saturday evening in late November, he was dismayed to find, that the saloon was the only venue open where one could get a hot cup of tea and dry off by the fire. To his further disappointment, he discovered there was no 'house of worship' in this rough and tumble town, to say his prayers the next morning.

Seeing it as a sign from God, that he should minister to the un-churched cowboys of the west, he returned home to share the good news with his wife (wish I was a mousy in the corner on that one), and make arrangements with the Presbyterian Church in Canada to begin this mission work in the untamed hills of the Okanagan. In time, he, and other clergy who would follow him, would expand the missionary charge, to include the communities of Armstrong, and for a time, Salmon Arm: a service in the morning in Vernon, the early afternoon in Armstrong, and

Sunday evening prayer service in Salmon Arm; a short rest at the Clerk of Session's home overnight, and return home on Monday, to begin the week's work.

"FOR HE  
HIMSELF IS OUR  
PEACE, WHO HAS  
MADE THE TWO  
GROUPS ONE  
AND HAS  
DESTROYED THE  
BARRIER, THE  
DIVIDING WALL  
OF HOSTILITY"

~EPHESIANS 2:14

This valley has been drawing people to its hills for many a year, all in search of some form of 'peace.' From homesteaders and pioneers and cowboys and trail blazers who have all heeded the call to "Go west, young man," to the thousands who seasonally call the Okanagan their home for summer fun and play with boats and planes and motorcycles and RV's; from those living a well deserved

retirement dream of golf and ski and Arizona winters, to those who enjoy the mild winters here, long summers and the bounty of the fresh fruit crops. For some, this is a resting point between Vancouver and Calgary, for others, a place far enough away from the past, but close enough to reach out if needed. And for those who have had the privilege of growing up in the west, you believe that the whole world thinks with this slight edge of adventure on your heart.

We are quite the menagerie of people, who ended up here in this old Okanagan cowboy town.

- Some have found satisfaction, the peace of contentment, for a retirement life well earned. Some have found solace in the peaceful steadfastness of the mountains.
- Some have found the quieter pace of a smaller town to bring peace to a frenzied soul, tired of runny the race of city life.
- Some have found this a place to escape, and breathe deeply of the majesty of creation and

the peace of  
reconnecting with our  
place in the circle of  
life.

- Yet, here we are, with all our different trails and journeys connecting here in the Vernon of today, connecting now, as brothers and sisters of the faith, worshipping together.

And in a few minutes, as we gather, and laugh and eat and eat some more, you will hear, and taste, and see, peace in the valley.

Paul preached to a mixed crowd: Jews and gentiles, believers and cynics, Africans and Greeks, traders and slaves. And he said,

*For he [Christ] himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.” (v14)*

“It’s not about us and them,” said Paul. “It’s just about us! It doesn’t matter where you came from or how you got here. Because you are here, now, you can be one of us. Simple as that. No more rules, no more background checks, no need for ancestry.com to prove your heritage. Come as you are, and be with us. Then, you will find the peace you seek.”

Well, for a culture that always prided itself on its history and

lineage to Abraham himself, and an understanding that God had carved out the Promised Land to be theirs and theirs alone, this was a difficult idea to take in: that others might be welcome as well. My friends, we live today in a world that would rather divide than gather, horde rather than share, blame rather than forgive. We want to draw lines in the sand and decide who is welcome and who is not.

But look at us cowboys and cowgirls. And think about all the different dusty trails, professionally, personally, spiritually, that have brought us here: to live together, work together, and pray together in this city called Vernon. Whether we realize it or not, and probably quite without intention, we are the living examples of what Paul was trying to get across to the people of Ephesus: “We don’t all need to be the same; we don’t all need to live out the same peace. As long as we all have Christ first in our hearts, that peace will be achieved.”

So as make our ways down the trail today to the cabins we call home, take a moment to consider:

- What brought you to this valley?
- What kind of peace are you seeking?
- What brings you peace in this valley?

*There will be peace in the valley for me, some day  
There will be peace in the valley for me, oh Lord I pray  
There'll be no sadness, no sorrow*

*No trouble, trouble I see  
There will be peace in the valley for me, for me*

~Thomas Dorsey