

Welcome and Announcements – Brendon

Good morning, Emmanuel. Welcome to our service for the fifth Sunday after Pentecost, or the fifth Sunday of ordinary time. Isn't summer wonderful? Sunshine and warmth, mixed in with a bit of rain and some bugs, camping and fishing and fires. What's not to be grateful for? I trust that it's been a good week for you, as you celebrated Canada Day, and for the Americans among us, July 4. May we give appropriate honour to our national heritages even as we strive to live more fully as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

We gather each week to imagine what our lives could be like because Jesus is Lord, and we believe he is at work in our world making all things new. So we gather to be reminded of who Jesus is, King of kings and Lord of lords, of who we are as his beloved children, and who together we can be as a community seeking his kingdom and pursuing his righteousness and justice in our world. May we allow the Holy Spirit to form us in his righteousness and justice so we may act justly and love mercy and walk humbly with our God.

I am deeply grateful for the ongoing ability to stay connected like this as we continue through this pandemic, but I also long for the day when it will be all over and we'll be able to resume life fully as a church family. I miss seeing all of you and being present together as a family. I miss handshakes and hugs; I miss the noise of chatter and laughter and being physically present to each other. As I record on Saturdays or listen on Sundays, I try to imagine your faces as you listen and receive this, and that helps, but nothing beats physical presence, so I keep longing for that. But I've also come to appreciate that such a longing, to be back together, is also part of a greater longing for the kingdom that is to come, and for the coming together of all God's people in the presence of Jesus, our reigning Lord, in the new creation. And I pray that each of those longings will inform the other.

You can find more information on our website, www.ebap.ca, about ways to connect during this season of physical distancing. Simply click on the banner that says "New Ways of Connecting @ EBC". A lot of that information is also sent out in the weekly emails that Jan sends out on Mondays. And remember to check out the weekly bulletin for prayer concerns and other information about our church family.

In this week's bulletin, there's a note from the nominating committee inviting nominations of suitable candidates to serve on the board of elders for the next season, which will begin after our Annual General Meeting in October. This is a significant way to serve our church family and participate in the leadership and oversight of our church. I am grateful for our elders and the good work they do. Each elder can serve two three-year terms, so there's usually one or more rotating off each year, hence the need to replace them. If you'd like to nominate someone to serve, you can contact the office for more details on that. Just send Jan an email at info@ebap.ca. The deadline for nominations is August 16.

Now, let us lift up our hearts in joyful worship and grateful thanksgiving to Jesus, our risen and exalted Lord. May he continue to strengthen us in every way as we look to

him and trust in him. May he fill us with his Spirit and enable us to be the people he created and redeemed us to be, for his glory and for the good of the world. Amen.

Song – Emmanuel Musicians

In the morning Lord we do look to You
for the strength we need just to make it through
Have mercy

In the evening Lord we look back and say
it was in Your strength that we made our way
Have mercy

You are everything we need
feed us Lord
You are everything we need
feed us Lord

Gord Johnson

Children's Moment – Beverly

(Brendon) And now here's a message from Miss Beverly, Director of Children's Ministry:

(Beverly) Hi everyone, I'm really happy to get to say hello to you all.
I'll be with you each week this summer with a special howdy to the children who are listening to this!

To the kids?
I want you to know I have spent lots of time thinking of you all and praying for you and your families as well.

In the past few weeks, I've been back in the church building - and it is so different walking down the empty hallways and stepping into the empty classrooms.

I miss you.

I miss the fun of loving God, thanking God, praising God, and learning about God together.

I miss you. I miss the special unique things about you too.

Some of you smile ear to ear without making a sound.
Some of you like to laugh really loud.
Some of you like to read lots and lots, and others of you enjoy running outside until you can hardly breathe.

Some of you love to eat cucumbers and tomatoes and peas, and others of you really don't.

Can I remind you that you bring A LOT of joy to others just by being who you are? Just by being you. Just the way God made you. Special. Unique.

Usually this would be the time in July that our summer kids camps would begin. Not this year.

However, there have been reports that a panda is on the loose. You know, the panda we all know and love. Our kids camp panda. We have even received a video where he can be seen.

If you see this panda around your neighborhood...please let us know! We have set up a special email for you to use just in case you can help us out with this mystery. Let us know at ISawThePanda@ebap.ca.

In the meantime friends, enjoy God's creation in the great outdoors!

And remember how much God loves you.

There is a verse in the Bible that tells us God's great love is new every morning. Lord, how faithful You are. We thank you for that. Have a great week everyone.

Song – Emmanuel Musicians

This Is My Father's World

This is my father's world
and to my listening ears
All nature sings, and round me rings
the music of the spheres

This is my father's world
I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas
His hand the wonders wrought

This is my father's world
oh, let me never forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong
God is the ruler yet

This is my father's world
why should my heart be sad
The Lord is king, let the heavens ring
God reigns, let the earth be glad

Franklin Lawrence Sheppard
Maltbie Davenport Babcock

Community Prayer – Bill

Good morning, my name is Bill Roesler and I will be leading us in community prayer this morning, but before I do that, let us pray together the prayer of confession:

We confess to you, Lord,
what we are:

we are not the people
we like others to think we are;

we are afraid to admit even to ourselves
what lies in the depths of our souls.

But we do not want to hide
our true selves from you.

(Silence)

We believe that you know us as we are,
and yet you love us.

Help us not to shrink
from self-knowledge;

teach us to respect ourselves
and affirm our uniqueness and worth;

give us the courage to put our trust
in your guiding and power.

(Silence)

We also confess to you, Lord,
the unrest of the world,

to which we contribute
and in which we share.

Forgive our reliance
on weapons of terror,

our cold indifference
to the needs of others,

our discrimination
against people of different races

our preoccupation
with material standards.

(Silence)

Forgive our being unsure
of the good news about you and from you,

and so unready to tell it,
share it and live it.

Raise us out of the paralysis of guilt
into the freedom and energy
of forgiven people.

And for those who through long habit
find forgiveness hard to accept
we ask you to break their bondage
and set them free
through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Baptist Union of Great Britain

Dear Heavenly Father, we gather today separated in our homes but united in our love for you and for each other. We give thanks that we have the freedom to worship you as a community of believers, and rejoice in this day that you have given us to worship you.

Lord, we want to be people who readily find reasons to be thankful, to live a life that is full of thanksgiving. Help remind us of your words to us in 1 Thessalonians 5 that instruct us to be “thankful in all circumstances”. The kind of people that see you and your goodness throughout our day in the small and simple things. Like the freshness and coolness of our summer mornings; the pitter-patter of rain on our roofs; the chirping of the birds; the rustle of leaves as the wind blows; the color of sunrises and sunsets; the different and spectacular cloud formations. Would we be ever mindful of your presence in our world and in our lives, and remind us to invite you to walk alongside of us every day into all of our circumstances and situations.

This past week we had the opportunity to celebrate Canada Day, and we give thanks Jesus for our country, a slice of land broad and wide, blessed with rivers and great lakes, wide skies and great forests, high mountains and gracious plains, beautiful from sea to sea to sea. Thank you for letting us live in this land, even though we do not own it; this land is your land, which we use in trust for future generations. Thank you for its rich history, which includes the Inuit and Aboriginal and Metis peoples. We pray for

justice and wisdom as we work on difficult and abusive relationships with First Peoples. Thank you for our system of government, for the right to speak freely, and to elect our leaders. Thank you for the freedom of religion and conscience that we enjoy. Thank you for universal health care, and a social safety net, even though not all are caught by it, and not all dwell in safety. We want a country that is the best it can be, a home for all, welcoming refugees and newcomers, sharing this wealthy country with the world. Bless our leaders, our Prime Minister and all members of parliament; guide their steps, and empower us to use our voice to help them as they make difficult and far-reaching decisions. We thank you today for our home and native land-- thank you for giving us a home here, where we live in peace and security. God keep our land, Canada, strong and free, and keep it safe and beautiful for future generations.

There is much reason for fear and anxiety in this broken world we live in, and we can be inundated daily with grim news from around the world as well as overwhelmed with relational breakdowns and health concerns in our own circles. We take comfort knowing that You are fully aware of the struggles in our lives. When life gets to be too much, please help us to come to you. Calm our thoughts and emotions and open our hearts to your peace, comfort, and wisdom. Help us live in faith and prayer instead of fear. Help us to rest in You and trust You as we navigate through this broken world.

We ask now that you be with Brendon and with all of us as we dive into your word as we expand our thoughts on what it means to abide in you. May each of us hear from you what you know we need to hear. We ask all of these things in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

Scripture Reading – Jeremy

(Brendon) Our Scripture for today is John 15:1-17. It will be read by Jeremy Rempel, from the New Revised Standard Version.

¹“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. ² He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.

³ You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches.

Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers;

such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My

Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my

commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹²“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends

if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because

I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷ I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Song – Emmanuel Musicians

More Than Anything

What can compare to the love of Jesus
who can repair every broken thing
No other One can break this darkness
no other name no other name

We need You more than anything
Jesus, we need You more than anything

Through the calm and the storm in the chaos
though the mountains will crumble You will not
Never failing Your promise eternal

We need You more than anything
Jesus, we need You more than anything

David Leonard
Jason Ingram
Leslie Jordan
Stuart Garrard

Abiding Reflections – Verne and Laura

(Brendon) Please join me in prayer: Triune God, Father, Son and Spirit, thank you for your love for us and for this life that you have drawn us into. Grant us the grace to pay attention to you and to all that you are doing in us and among us as we walk with you and live in you day by day. Speak to us now by your Spirit and help us to hear from you those things you want to say to us now. We ask in your holy name. Amen.

We are into the second month of our summer series called “Abide” in which we are exploring the invitation from Jesus to abide or remain in him, as he abides or remains with us and in us. Before we get into today’s teaching, I want us to hear from two persons in our church family as they respond to the question: What does abiding in Jesus look like in your life? Here’s Vern Harder and Laura Monchuk:

(Vern) What abiding in Jesus means to me is being steadfast in my faith. Psalm 112:7 says “They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the

Lord.”

God created me in His image to have a relationship with Him. So I know that Jesus is always with me and I only have to acknowledge that to have a relationship with Him. It gives me a confidence to face whatever comes my way in my life. That is very important to me in this time of the pandemic. It is a very scary time for all of us but I know if I do what's safe then I have done my part and the rest is in God's hands. Knowing what's in the Bible by reading and re-reading keeps me connected to Jesus. Most often by re-reading the same verses I get new insights for what it means for me.

Listening to church services on TV, ZOOM, and through the internet keeps me connected to Jesus also. It's not being there physically, but I can be there in spirit. Isaiah 26:3,4 says “You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast because they trust in you. Trust in the Lord forever for the Lord, the Lord Himself is the rock eternal.” These two verses give me great peace of mind, knowing that I am secure in the Lord, abiding in Him - the Eternal Rock.

(Laura) I love the word picture Jesus paints of the grapevine to illustrate just how closely he wants to live with us! As I remain in Him and He remains in me – that's as near as my heart, my skin, and the air I breathe.

As I grow in relationship with Jesus, I am learning to enjoy His presence more and more. I want to make like a branch of grapes and hang with Jesus! I pray things out with God throughout the day, talking things out with Him like the good Father that He is. For the past several months, most days I read a small portion of scripture, reflect on it and write back a prayer to God in light of His Word to me. Other times I journal and paint in my journaling Bible. I often listen to and sing worship songs while I'm folding laundry or washing dishes.

I find myself speaking his name often in my day. This comes more naturally now that he has become such a close friend and such a big part of my life. He deserves even more credit than I can give, but I do often speak his name to others, and I have nurtured many relationships in which they regularly talk with me about their walk with God, which strengthens my bond with them as friends and with Jesus.

I need Him every minute, and while I acknowledge this, I regularly find myself striving in my own list of to-dos and leaning on my own limited strength and resources. I too often forget that I am connected to Jesus' power and abundance and that it is through Him alone that the good spiritual fruit can grow. Dependence is something that in certain seasons comes easier to me than in other seasons, so this is one of many areas I am seeking growth and guidance in as I spend quiet time with Jesus.

Teaching – Brendon

Thanks, Vern and Laura for your reflections. As I've said before, I would love to hear how others of you abide in Jesus. What does abiding look like in your life? Send me an email sometime with your response.

So we've been looking at this metaphor of vine and branches that Jesus uses to describe the relationship between himself and his disciples. We are all branches on the vine of Jesus, each of us personally, and all of us as a church family. It is to each of us, as well as all of us, that Jesus says, "Remain in me; abide in me; stick with me."

Such abiding, we've noted, involves staying connected to Jesus, living in dependence on Jesus, persisting in our relationship with Jesus. We've also noted that, unlike a actual vine and its branches in which there is no choice in the matter, as persons who are intentional creatures, there is an element of choice for us. Jesus does not impose himself on us, and he does not force us to abide in him. To abide or not is a choice that we get to make, day by day.

So how do we abide? Well, the truth is that Jesus does not give a list of ten things to do to abide in him; but from my reading, in verses 7-10 of John 15, he gives us at least three related and interconnected practices. These are certainly not the only ways we abide in Jesus, but these are critical and foundational. He speaks of abiding in his word and his word abiding in us, which we looked at two Sundays ago; he speaks of abiding in his love, which Ernie Atkinson addressed last Sunday (Thanks Ernie for what you shared with us about the evidence of love, the experience of love, and the model of love. If you have not listened to Ernie's teaching, I encourage you to do so). Today, I want us to consider the third aspect of abiding that Jesus addresses, and that is keeping his commands.

As I said, these are interconnected practices. Jesus connects keeping his commands with abiding in his love - "If you keep my commands, you will abide in my love" (vs. 10). And keeping his commands is one way we abide in his word - we do what he says. In addition, his words are one of the means by which he communicates his love for us, so to remain in his words is to remain in his love. So all three are interconnected, and while it may help us to explore each specifically, we should not separate them. Like many of our practices, they inform each other and work together.

So let's think about abiding in Jesus by keeping or obeying his commands:

The first thing to notice is that Jesus speaks of commands, not suggestions or recommendations. Suggestions and recommendations can be considered and then ignored if we don't care for them; commands are meant to be obeyed. A command is an order or directive from a person in authority that calls for compliance and obedience.

There's a tension here that we need to acknowledge, one that all of us have experienced at one time or another, and that is the seriousness with which we take Jesus and his commands. Are they simply guidelines for us to follow, depending on the situation or how we are feeling, or are they commands to be obeyed.

Most of us chafe at being told what to do. Ever since the first couple asserted their right to disregard God's directive and do their own thing, we humans have insisted on our right to self-determination. And while that is a valid and valued right in all areas of human-to-human interaction, and while it's a freedom that God has given to each of us, even with regard to our relationship with him (we can choose to follow him or not), in our relationship with God, the Triune God whom Jesus has revealed to, to assert the right of self-determination is detrimental and deadly. It is akin to a branch saying, "I can survive

on my own apart from the vine.” To disregard or disobey God’s commands is to begin the process of shutting ourselves off from the life that comes to us from God.

According to Deuteronomy 10:13, God’s commands are for our own good. They are the directions that God has provided us with to live well and to flourish in life. As our Creator and Heavenly Father, God has ordered the world in particular ways, and he has provided us with instructions and commands to help us make our way in the world and experience life at its best. He knows best how life should be lived and he has instructed us as such.

And God has delegated all authority to Jesus, the God-man, who came to reconcile us to God and to give us “life to the full” (John 10:10). As the one who exists as fully God and fully man, Jesus understands how life should be lived and he also commands us for our good. As Ernie noted last week, Jesus is our model. He lived a life of humble obedience to his father. As Jesus himself says, “I have kept my Father’s commandments and remained in his love.”

As Lord of the universe, as King of his kingdom, and as head of his church, Jesus has the authority to command his people (Matthew 28:18). But he is no tyrannical dictator; he is a gracious and compassionate lord. He refers to his disciples as dear children in John 13:33, and later in chapter fifteen, verse fourteen, he calls his disciples his friends. But even there, he prefaces that by saying, “You are my friends if you do what I command you.” Both of the terms - dear children and friends - point to the depth of intimacy between Jesus and his people, as does the whole concept of abiding, or mutually indwelling each other. And yet, however deep and intimate the relationship may be, he remains our sovereign Lord who issues commands that he expects us to obey.

And keeping his commands is one of the ways we abide in Jesus. We walk in his ways and follow in his footsteps by obeying his commands. As we do so, we enter more fully into the life he has for us, a life of fullness and flourishing.

So what are his commands? Well, they are the teachings and instructions that he gave to those who heard him speak, including the directives he gave to those who followed him. Some are directed to specific persons, while others are directed to groups of seekers or his close followers. Some appear to be simple and clear; others are less so. But all are challenging and demanding.

They begin with his initial call to the Galilean communities to repent because the kingdom of heaven was present and available through allegiance to him (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15). He also issues the call to specific persons to follow him (Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17; Luke 5:27). Those who respond receive extended instruction in the ways of the kingdom, in addition to being exposed to his public teachings through parables (Matthew 13; Luke 13-16). Jesus reiterates and re-interprets the teachings of Moses and the prophets in ways that seem more demanding at times (Matthew 5-7); at other times, he rejects the restrictive interpretations of the law that had been imposed by the religious leaders (Matthew 12:1-14; 15:1-11; Mark 2:23-27; 7:1-13). As opposition to his ministry increases, he engages in public confrontation with, and warnings about, the religious leaders (Matthew 21-23), and he instructs his closest followers privately about the threat of opposition and persecution and calls them to be watchful and faithful

(Matthew 24-25). And in anticipation of his betrayal and death, he lingers over his last meal with his disciples, preparing them for what was to come (John 13-16).

We could spend a lifetime exploring the various commands of Jesus in the gospels, but this morning, I want to focus on just one of his commands. It's one that he repeats several times throughout this last conversation with his disciples. He introduces it as a New Command in chapter 13, verses 34-35, and then reiterates it twice in chapter 15, verses 12 and 17. It's the command to love one another, to love each other.

John 13:34-35 - "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 15:12 - "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."

John 15:17 - "This is my command: Love each other."

The newness of this command lies in the qualification that Jesus makes regarding the love to which he calls his followers. It is to love as he has loved. Jesus holds himself up as the model of the love to which he calls us and says, "Love as I have loved you." His love is the standard to which we aspire in all our loving.

Now, Jesus repeatedly emphasized the priority of love in his teachings. All three of the synoptic gospels - Matthew, Mark and Luke - record him affirming that the greatest commandment was to love God with your whole being and to love your neighbour as yourself (Matthew 22:37-39; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:27-28). And Jesus includes enemies - those who hate us and those we hate - among those he calls us to love. From Jesus' perspective, no one is to be excluded from the realm of love. He calls us to love everyone.

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus points to God's extravagant love for us (Luke 15:11-31), and in the story of the Good Samaritan, he gives us a model for love of neighbour and enemy (Luke 10:30-37). And on his last evening with his closest friends, he reiterates the importance of love, with his own love as the model and guide.

John, the author of the Gospel, introduces the evening with a focus on love.

John 13:1: "It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." How did he love his own who were in the world? He did so that evening by washing their feet. He assumed the position of a lowly household slave and served his disciples by washing their feet. That is the model of love that Jesus left his disciples, and he tells them explicitly afterwards that just as he had washed their feet, they should wash each other's feet (John 13:14). To love others is to serve them, humbly, graciously, generously.

It was after washing their feet that Jesus gave them the new command to love each other as he had loved them. Then later, in chapter 15, as he repeats his command to love each other, Jesus introduces two additional examples - the love he experienced from his father and his own love in laying down his life for his friends. John 15:9 - "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; now remain in my love." John 15:13 - "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." As his Father's

love had sustained Jesus throughout his life, so too, Jesus' love - a love that lays down its very life in sacrifice - will be there to sustain his friends.

Notice that Jesus' command to love is not issued in some arbitrary, abstract way. Like all his other commands, it is rooted in his relationship with his disciples, and he offers himself and his love as their example and for their encouragement. And furthermore, he will be within and among them to strengthen and sustain them in their loving. Because, the truth is that none of us can keep Jesus' commands in our own strength. We simply cannot. It is only as he nourishes us with his life, only as he empowers us by his Spirit, that we will be able to keep his commands.

You see, that is the beauty and grace of this life that Jesus calls us into: That which he commands, he also provides. Whatever he calls us to, he has already done for us. He shows us how to do it - he sets us the example - and he promises to be with us as we attempt to do it, because it is only through his provision and power that we will be able to do what he commands. He does not send us out on our own to keep his commands. He is with us - in fact, as we will see next week, the entire Trinity is with us, Father, Son and Spirit. And as we abide in Jesus, as we make our home in our Triune God, he gives us the ability and capacity to keep his commands.

"If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love..." "My command is this: Love each other."

Who are the others that we are called to love? At one level, they are our Christian brothers and sisters - the members of our church family, the members of the Christian family. Those to whom Jesus first addressed these words were the nucleus of the first church. That very evening, their commitment to Jesus will be tested and found wanting as they abandon him in fear at his arrest. But they will be drawn back together in a few days and even Peter, the one who denied him, will be welcomed back among them. That would be their first opportunity to practice Jesus' command. But many more will come after they encounter Jesus in his resurrection and receive the Spirit he promised.

As the book of Acts makes clear, they will come to love each other in an ever-expanding community of love as more are drawn into their company because of our loving witness to Jesus. Others did come to know they were Jesus' disciples because of their love for one another, and as their love overflowed to those beyond them. Because once love starts flowing freely, it overflows to others. It may start in the Christian community, in our church family, but it never stays there. It spills out onto others. It overflows to others.

What does such love look like today, among us? How do we love one another?

By welcoming each other in our gatherings.

By getting to know one another and cultivating relationships with each other.

By creating space for each other in our lives beyond our Sunday services.

By extending hospitality to each other, welcoming each other into our homes and into our lives.

By paying attention to each other's needs and concerns and offering to help with them.

By serving one another out of love for Jesus.

Now the truth is that even in a church family of our size, and we are not a large church, but even in a church family like ours, none of us will be able to know everyone in ways

that would allow us to love everyone else like this. Most of this sort of love will happen best in smaller groups, where we come to know each other intimately, where we love each other like family, where we are free to share our burdens and concerns so others can help us bear them.

I asked some folks this past week how they have experienced love in and through the church family and they offered the following:

Through welcome and acceptance from others.

Through greetings when we gather, including waves, smiles, handshakes and hugs.

Through visits, phone calls, cards, notes, encouraging words, and going for walks.

Inviting others in, or taking a meal or some baking to them.

Someone said: "Being in a small group is a lot cheaper than therapy."

Others said love is shown by:

Showing up when there is a need.

Offering rides, helping with childcare, with groceries, or with tasks.

Sharing resources, including financial assistance, homes, vehicles, tools, and skills.

Those are just some of the ways that we can show love. That's a very partial list, but I suspect that each of us can identify ways among them in which we have received love and have extended love to others.

Some of us are better at giving love than receiving it. In our independence and self-reliance, some of us struggle to have others love and serve us. But as a family, we should always be open to both giving and receiving. Let us look for ways to serve each other and let's not deprive others of the opportunity to serve us. And let's be open to expanding the circle of love to include others who are not yet part of the family. Let's allow our love to overflow and spill over to others in our neighbourhoods and the wider community.

The pandemic may have restricted our ability to gather in person as a church family, but it should not impact our ability to love and care for each other. Most of the ideas shared above are still options for us, even as we maintain physical distances. I am grateful for the many expressions of love I have received from you during this time, and also grateful for the opportunities I've had to express love to others during this time. So who might Jesus be prompting you to share his love with today or this week?

"If you love me," Jesus says, "keep my commands" (John 14:15, 23). "If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love..." (John 15:10). "My command is this: Love one another" (John 15:12). May Jesus fill our lives with his love as we abide in him, and may his love flow out from us to each other and to others beyond us as he helps us to keep his commands. Amen.

Let's pause now and ask Jesus to help us to pay attention to whatever he has been saying to us, and to give us the grace to do something about it.

Lord Jesus, we love you! You are our life. Thank you for your extravagant love for us. Help us to follow your example of love by loving each other as you have loved us. Lord, deepen our desire to keep your commands and strengthen us as we seek to do so day by day. May we live in you and know the reality of your life in us, forming us into the people you created and redeemed us to be. We ask in your holy name, and we pray now as you taught us:

Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name,
Thy Kingdom 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 kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

As I said earlier, I would love to hear from you how you are working at abiding in Jesus - what practices you use to help you stay connected to him, or how you have been engaging with this series thus far. Please email me, bgibson@ebap.ca and let me know. If you'd like prayer for anything, I or one of the other staff would be happy to hear from you as well. We would love to pray with you and do what we can to support you during this time. May we abide in Jesus by keeping his commands!

Song – Emmanuel Musicians

Abide With Me

Abide with me fast falls the eventide
the darkness deepens Lord with me abide
When other helpers fail and comforts flee
help of the helpless abide with me

I need Thy presence every passing hour
what but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be
through cloud and sunshine abide with me

Henry Francis Lyte
Justin Smith

Benediction - Brendon

May we go now, dependent on God, rooted in Jesus and led by the Spirit, to fully love God and all people for God's Kingdom, pleasure and glory. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Musicians

Adam Bourassa, Amy Bourassa, Scott Jeschke, Lauri Lee, Rob Lee, Scott Lepp, Chloe Meadows, Reisha Peters, Seth Peters, rob Priestley, Jordan Reimer, Joyce Reimer, Ian Summach, Jordan Summach.