

## CBWC Sunday 2020 Script

**Faye Reynolds:** In the name of the Father our Creator, Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord, and the abiding Holy Spirit, I welcome you today to the shared experience of worship of Canadian Baptists across Western Canada. Today we celebrate a faithful God who is at work in you, our CBWC family, and thus continuing to bring that work to completion until the day of our Christ's return. Thank you for joining with us today, and it is our collective prayer that we will find blessing and encouragement as we worship together as Jesus prayed for the unity of His church, may we experience a touch of that heavenly presence today.

### **SONG: Forever**

*Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King*

*His love endures forever*

*For He is good, He is above all things*

*His love endures forever*

*Sing praise, sing praise*

*With a mighty hand and outstretched arm*

*His love endures forever*

*For the life that's been reborn*

*His love endures forever*

*Sing praise, sing praise*

*Sing praise, sing praise*

*Forever, God is faithful*

*Forever, God is strong*

*Forever, God is with us*

*Forever*

*From the rising to the setting sun*

*His love endures forever*

*And by the grace of God, we will carry on*

*His love endures forever*

*His love endures forever*

*His love endures forever*

*His love endures forever*

*Forever*

**Faye Reynolds:** Leading our worship time together today, let me introduce to you Craig Bosnick, Dan Bennett and Benjamin Bosnick. Craig and Dan were looking forward to leading us in worship at the Banff Pastors Conference this year. But you know, things have changed. Instead we have the joy of having them lead us together in worship, and so let us celebrate in song.

**SONG: Cornerstone**

*My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame  
But wholly trust in Jesus' name*

*Christ alone, Cornerstone  
Weak made strong in the Savior's love  
Through the storm  
He is Lord, Lord of all*

*When darkness seems to hide His face  
I rest on His unchanging grace  
In every high and stormy gale  
My anchor holds within the veil  
My anchor holds within the veil*

*When he shall come with trumpet sound  
Oh, may I then in Him be found  
Dressed in His righteousness alone  
Faultless, stand before the throne*

**CHILDREN'S MOMENT: Peter Anderson:** This morning I have some special guests with me: I have Lincoln and Everett. You guys wanna give a wave? We're going to play a game called catch. You guys want to play catch? Alright but here's how we're going to do it: first of all, Lincoln you stand here. I'm going to throw the ball, but guess what? You don't have any eyes!

So close your eyes. Now catch. You missed! OK let's try Everett. Everett, you're going to catch it. No, no, you have eyes. Open your eyes. But you don't have any hands! So put your hands behind your back. Now catch the ball. Oh no! You missed! There's a problem! In order to catch the ball we need to do something.

So Everett, you stand here. Put your arms behind your back. Put your arms like this. Lincoln, come behind Everett. You put your arms around. OK like this now, you put your arms out like this and you're going to catch the ball. Ready! Set! Can you say Go? Go! Hey we did it! Well done boys. Thank you everybody.

Well, that game that was a little bit funny. You saw that Levi and Everett and Lincoln couldn't do it on their own. Someone needed to say, "go" and that was Levi's job. He was the voice. Someone needed to be able to see the ball coming, and that was Everett. But someone also needed to be the hands and catch it, and that was Lincoln. They couldn't do it on their own, but together they could.

The Church, the people of God, are kind of like Jesus's body; we all work together for one purpose. Paul says, "but our bodies have many parts and God has put each part just where he wants it. How strange your body would be if it only had one part!" That would be funny, yes. "There are many parts but only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, 'I don't need you.' The head can't say to the feet, 'I don't need you.' All of you together are Jesus' body and each one of you is a part of it."

This is exciting news for us. We can look at others and say wow, I wish I were like them, or I wish I had what they had. But you know what, each one of you has something that you can give. God has made you in a way where you can love people around you in a special way, and we need you to do those things. We need you to live well into what you've been given, to use the things that God is giving you to support those people around you who need it. So whatever it is that God is giving you to make you special, use it! Love others in doing so you're loving God. Let's pray.

God, thank you for the way that you've made all of us and that you've made us in your image. You've made us in a way that you said is very good. We're not all the same. Help us to not look around and say, "Oh, I wish I were like them. I wish you were like them," but to say, "Oh God you've given me this special gift. I'm good at this I'm good at that," and then we would use those things to show other people your love. Amen.

***SONG: Great is Thy Faithfulness***

*Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not  
As Thou hast been Thou forever will be.*

*Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
All I have needed Thy hand has provided—*

*Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

*Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.*

*Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!*

***SONG: Great Are You Lord***

*You give life, You are love  
You bring light to the darkness  
You give hope, You restore  
Every heart that is broken  
Great are You, Lord*

*It's Your breath in our lungs  
So we pour out our praise  
We pour out our praise  
It's Your breath in our lungs  
So we pour out our praise to You only*

*And all the earth will shout Your praise  
Our hearts will cry, these bones will sing  
Great are You, Lord*

**GENEROSITY: Louanne Haugan:** Hi there! I'm Louanne and I'm the CBWC's Director of Communications & Development, and I bring you warm greetings today from all of my colleagues who work out of the Calgary head office!

During this time in the service when you may have been passing the offering plate around (and who knows when we'll be able to that again!), I wanted to thank you for continuing to give generously to your local church

during this very strange season. You've shown great resiliency in learning how to give online or by e-transfer -- we have all had to make changes to how we give, and for that -- thank you.

In the book of Acts we read about the early church who, having just experienced the power of the resurrection, found themselves boldly spreading the word through the power of the Holy Spirit. And as they did this, a very interesting thing happened – generosity! “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them.”

As we navigate this extraordinary time in history as a family of churches, God is calling us to be of one heart and one mind and a people who--through radical generosity -- demonstrate His power in our lives and in our communities. Wouldn't it be amazing to look back one day and say, “during the global shift of COVID-19 there were no needy persons among them?”

May it be so, Lord Jesus... may it be so.

**Shannon Youell:** Engaging in mission is all about growing fresh expressions and intentional implementation of the Gospel in our neighbourhoods and our cities, wherever we live, work, play, and pray. Emanuel Iranian Church is one such fresh expression.

**Arash Azad:** Our congregation is composed of 700 people in two campuses: one in North Vancouver and the other one was planted in May 2019. I am serving a few other churches in Turkey via Skype and Zoom. I'm so amazed to see many people are coming to faith from their Muslim background. When they hear the Good News, when they encounter Jesus and the Holy Spirit here they become faithful Christians.

**Shannon Youell:** Arash's team is able to reach a population that is basically unreached thus far by CBWC. They are on the front lines of mission in Western Canada. They're bringing hope and good news to all who come near them and to them.

**Arash Azad:** In 2020, we had 180 baptisms in the ocean. The joy is overwhelming when I see people are coming from darkness, they feel the reality of God and then they submit themselves to this new faith. There is a huge thirst amongst Iranians to hear from the Lord.

**Shannon Youell:** This church is supported by you, our CBWC family, to help them do this crucial ministry amongst the Iranian people here in North Vancouver and in Coquitlam and in Turkey. We need more of our churches to help us fund these church plants so that they can be successful and sustainable. With your help and by the power of the Holy Spirit guiding us, we look forward to growing and engaging in mission deeper and farther, both locally and globally.

**SCRIPTURE: Chris Reid:** Hi, I'm Chris and it's my privilege to present Scripture to you today: Psalm 46.

*God is our refuge and strength,  
an ever-present help in trouble.*

*Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way  
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,  
though its waters roar and foam  
and the mountains quake with their surging.*

*There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy place where the Most High dwells.*

*God is within her, she will not fall;  
God will help her at break of day.  
Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;  
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.*

*The Lord Almighty is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

*Come and see what the Lord has done,  
the desolations he has brought on the earth.*

*He makes wars cease  
to the ends of the earth.*

*He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;  
he burns the shields with fire.*

*He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth."*

*The Lord Almighty is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

**SERMON: Rob Ogilvie:** Hi my name is Rob Ogilvie and I serve as the Executive Minister for the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada, and have for about the last three and a half years now. Before that I spent nine years as the Regional Minister for BC and the Yukon and prior to that I served in two different churches where I pastored over a period of 13 years. I want to thank Kurtis and First Baptist Church for sharing their facility and their technology with us, and being able to record this message for you today.

You know, often I get asked by people what is it that the Executive Minister actually does, and it's a good and fair question. I think the best way to answer it is to say that I see my role as working along with our Staff team to support you pastors and churches to thrive in the ministry that God has called you to at this time, in your location. That looks somewhat different for each of you, but I truly do hope that you feel that support, and that as people who are part of the family of churches, the CBWC, you know that we are available to walk with you whatever your ministry situation might be. It's a real privilege to be invited to share with you this morning on behalf of CBWC Sunday.

If I was there with you, I would like to be able to look you in the eye and ask each of you how you're doing. How are you feeling? How are you coping with COVID? I saw this picture online and thought some of us might be able to relate to it. If 2020 was an ice cream truck: really? Liver and onions? Now, unless you really love liver and onions like my dad did, I think you'll understand what this is really like. You know, if a year ago somebody said to you that within a period of about one week all the businesses, all the schools, all the churches right across our entire country, would have been forced to close due to a virus that is infecting the entire world, would you believe them? I think I would have said it sounds more like some Hollywood script than reality. But then March 2020 hit. And it became a reality. And I must admit that at first I kept thinking this is only going to last a couple of weeks and will get back to normal. And then, well, maybe it'll just last for the summer and then we'll get back to normal. Now here we are eight months later. Still finding ourselves in this reality and it's challenging.

And as we approach winter, I'm reminded of the conversations that many of us had back in March and April and how we talked about how glad we were that this had happened in the springtime when the temperatures were already warming up and it was more available to go outside. And now. We look ahead. And we know that we're going to be forced inside by the cold of winter. People's stress levels are rising. So many lives have been lost and people are grieving. Businesses shut down. The economy is being challenged on every front. And life in the church isn't easy either. Pastors are feeling a tension like they've never felt before. In some cases I've been told by some of our pastors that they have parishioners who have threatened to leave their church if it isn't reopened right away and things back to normal. And at the same time that same pastor is being threatened by people in their church who are saying that if you open the doors of this church and you try to bring things back to normal before this virus is eliminated, then they too will leave the church. It's a terrible position to be put into. A terrible stress to be under.

It's also extremely difficult to make plans. I remember back in June my assistant and I were going into a meeting and I turned to her and I said, "Are you ready to go into another meeting where we can't make any plans and we really can't make any decisions about what's going on?" It's frustrating. For anybody who is not comfortable with uncertainty—and I think many of us are uncomfortable with uncertainty—it's a difficult time.

As you know, one of the great blessings of church is community. We not only gather to worship, but we also gather to fellowship with one another and the need for masks and physical distancing and reduced numbers and no shared food and drinks—now let me just pause it and I don't want you to get me wrong. I fully support the health recommendations and I urge churches to adhere to all the health recommendations that are put out and we do that out of a genuine sense of love. For those who are around us—and all of those things that restrict us in some ways do cause the opportunity of meaningful fellowship to be dramatically reduced. We're in uncharted territory for how the church today operates.

We understand that the church is the building—no, the church is the people! It's not the building. But we're so used to having the building facilitate much of our ministry, that we're struggling to find alternative ways of engaging with God as a Body. For just a few minutes today I want to share with you that it's not all doom and gloom. There are good things happening even in the midst of COVID. And as a people of hope, we cling to the fact that we are not in this alone, but the spirit of God is with us.

A few moments ago you heard Chris read Psalm 46. If you're used to reading your Bible, you will be very familiar with these words more than likely: words that are often turned to in times of struggle and difficulty and challenge, because in these words we find hope. God is our refuge. God is our strength. God is our ever-present help in times of struggle, even when the earth quakes or the mountains fall into the seas. I remember my first earthquake in Vancouver. I was in my home office. All of a sudden something felt strange and I couldn't really identify it and I was uncertain. And I walked out of my office into the hallway and that's when the reality came to me: when I looked up and I saw a light that was hanging over our staircase that was just swaying back and forth. And then suddenly I began thinking about my wife, knowing that she was at work, but not knowing exactly where she was, and was she OK? And then what about my kids? My kids are at school. Are they OK? And what am I supposed to do right now? Should I stand in a doorway? Should I run outside? Should I hide under a table? It's a very unsettling experience, the first time especially.

God is our refuge. God is our strength and ever-present help in times of struggle. When the earth shakes. Or when we must be the church in an entirely different way. Not because someone has conspired to shut us down. But for reasons of health and safety and love and care for one another. These are words that we lean to, and we're in desperate need of hearing and embracing. One of the great privileges of serving in a role like mine is that you get to hear stories of what God's doing in other churches from all across Western Canada. And as I hear these stories my heart is warmed, as I'm reminded that even though for a period of time our church buildings were closed, our churches never were. Outdoor services, drive-in services, dividing up the church phone directory among the leaders to ensure people still felt connected with a phone call. All very meaningful adjustments that were made.

And how about the online presence? Amazes me how quickly the vast majority of CBWC churches figured out how to take their worship services online. It might have been through Facebook, YouTube, Zoom, whatever format that you used. Can you imagine prior to COVID how many meetings it would have taken you to have

your church actually come and agree upon doing that sort of thing? Taking such a radical step? I'm sure it would have been many. And what encourages me even more when I speak to pastors, and they say that when we do return to some semblance of normal, their churches will continue in online presence. That's great.

And what about the younger generation? Suddenly we've embraced them. Because they just naturally get so much of the technology that many of the old people like me just don't. At a time like this that we are reminded that the younger generation is not the church of tomorrow. They too are the church of today. Creativity continues as we've been allowed back into church buildings. Yes, with some restrictions. Some congregations have gone to multiple services in order to keep adequate physical distancing, but still allow as many people as possible to come into worship together. I know of one church that made the effort of starting a brand new parents and children's program that happens on Sunday evening: an opportunity for family bubbles to be able to come together and to worship together on a Sunday evening.

Just another creative way of thinking responsibly about how we do this opportunity of worship that we have. And how good is it that. We've had several churches that have been trying to figure out how to do infant dedications and baptisms, all the while still adhering to public health regulations. Lives are still being changed. People are still coming to know Jesus personally and have a desire to follow him. Some of you may recall that at our last Assembly gathering, we welcomed Emmanuel Iranian Church as a new member of the CBWC. And at that time we heard amazing stories of large numbers of baptisms that were happening as Muslim people were coming to faith in Jesus Christ. I want you to know that COVID hasn't slowed God down. And over the last few months, Emanuel Iranian Church in Vancouver and Coquitlam have had another 130 baptisms. Thanks be to God. And the launch of Kurios, our new gap year program. I've got to admit I didn't know if it would happen or not. We were originally planned to launch in September this year, but I wasn't sure. But thanks to the prompting of the spirit and thanks to the heart and the passion of leaders like Peter Anderson and Steve Simala Grant, Kurios was reimaged. And we have five young adults who are learning and growing both together and online in this year. The church is not closed. And God continues to work through his people. Even in the midst of this crisis.

A hundred years ago when I was a student at a school called BLTS—the Baptist Leadership Training School, which was our former gap year program, there is a popular chorus that was entitled “The Steadfast Love of the Lord Never Ceases.” It carries on by saying, “his mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. New every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness, O Lord. Great is Thy faithfulness.” These words come from a passage of Scripture in the book of Lamentations. It's one of the Old Testament books that most people probably don't spend a whole lot of time reading. But in Lamentations Chapter 3, the author of the book is complaining. About the struggles and the challenges and the difficulties that he is facing and then suddenly at verse 21 he stops complaining. And he makes it shift and he says this, he says, “yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope. Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed. For his compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness.”

Eugene Peterson takes his words and paraphrases them this way: “God's loyal love couldn't have run out. His merciful love couldn't have dried up. They're created new every morning. How great your faithfulness. I'm sticking with God. I say it over and over. He's all I got left.”

Others of you will be very familiar with the old hymn entitled “Great is Thy Faithfulness.” It was also inspired by the same Scripture passage. “Great is Thy faithfulness, O God, my Father. There is no shadow of turning with Thee. Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not. As thou hast been, Thou forever, will be. Great is thy faithfulness. Great is thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed Thy hand has provided. Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me. I don't know about you. But I need to cling to these words. And be reminded of them over and over again. Because the love and the assurance and the faithfulness of God is one of the few constants that we have to cling to today. It doesn't mean that we won't continue to struggle or face challenges. It doesn't mean that COVID will suddenly end tomorrow. We can't go back to how things were before, and perhaps maybe there's some things that we shouldn't be going back to. It doesn't mean that we put our heads in the sand and not acknowledge the additional stress than the anxiety and depression and uncertainty that so many people are living under and that has been exacerbated by COVID.

But this is what it does mean: it means that each day as we rise as people of faith, as followers of God, the Father, Son and Spirit, we're not in this alone. And his compassions never fail. It does mean that the Lord Almighty is with us, the God of Jacob is our fortress. It does mean that. God's loyal love couldn't have run out. It does mean that. All I have needed, God's hand has provided. My hope and my prayer for each and every person who is part of each and every congregation that make up the CBWC is that even in the midst of all of our struggles, that we will cling to the hope of the faithfulness of God and trusted, as his mercies are new every morning we will rise each day, still being able to say, “Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father. May the peace of Christ be with you all. And keep well.

***SONG: Yes and Amen***

*Father of kindness*

*You have poured out of grace*

*You brought me out of darkness*

*You have filled me with peace*

*Giver of mercy*

*You're my help in time of need*

*Lord I can't help but sing*

*Faithful, You are*

*Faithful, forever, You will be*

*Faithful, You are*

*All Your promises are Yes and Amen  
All Your promises are Yes and Amen*

*Beautiful Saviour  
You have brought me here  
You pulled me from the ashes*

*You have broken every curse*

*Blessed Redeemer  
You have set this captive free  
Lord I can't help but sing*

*I will rest in Your promises  
My confidence is Your faithfulness*

**BENEDICTION: Faye Reynolds:** Thank you for worshiping with us today. And now go under the grace, the mercy and the ever abiding love of God, who is our refuge, our strength and source of all life, abundant and free. And go with the confidence that God's redemptive story is at work in you and through you, his beloved bride, the church. Amen.