

**Osler Mennonite Church**  
**Gary D. Peters**  
**Sunday, February 4, 2024**  
**Licensing service for Luke Bushman**

**Texts:** Isaiah 40:21-31; Mark 1:29-39

**"By whose authority?"**

**1. Introduction**

As Executive Minister, I bring you greetings on behalf of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan (MC Sask), a family of 21 congregations, covenanted together as Christ, Centred & Sent. We prayerfully support one another, joining together in ministry alongside other congregations of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite World Conference, trusting that as we do, God's healing and hope flows through us to all the world.

It is an honor and privilege to be here with you this morning. We have come to celebrate the credentialing and licensing of Luke Bushman for ministry in Osler Mennonite and Nutana Park Mennonite Churches.

**2. Authority**

We have heard a Bible passage which describes the teaching and the healings performed by Jesus. Was this a typical day for Jesus as he was beginning his ministry? It was the sabbath and he and his disciples have been in the synagogue. The people have been amazed at this man, Jesus. The verses just before the passage that was read says that Jesus has been teaching and we are told he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. The people ask each other, *"What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."*<sup>28</sup> *At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.* (Mark 1:27b-28)

After the synagogue service Jesus and his companions go to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother was ill with a fever and upon entering the home Jesus is immediately told. In pre-antibiotic times fevers could have a much more serious outcome than today. The possibility of death was much greater. Jesus goes to her immediately, takes her by the hand, lifts her up and she is healed completely. She is able to resume the duties of the gracious host. Jesus responds to the needs of those he meets with care, love and healing.

Later that evening, when the sabbath ended, people brought those who were sick and Jesus heals them. In fact, the whole city came. The text doesn't tell us but we can assume the evening stretched well into the night and it would have been late before Jesus and his friends were able to rest and to sleep. Early the next morning, before the sun rises, Jesus finds a place where he can be alone and he prays. The others slept longer and when they woke, they went to search for Jesus. They were excited. Jesus had demonstrated some extraordinary power. He had healed. He had preached. Crowds of people had come to hear him and bring to him those in need of healing. Jesus was gaining a popularity Simon, Andrew, James and John had not ever imagined.

When they found Jesus, they said excitedly, *"Everyone is searching for you"* (Mark 1:37). Jesus, however, dismissed this and answered, *"Let's go to the neighboring towns. I have a*

message to proclaim there also. That is what my task is." And then, we are told, Jesus went and proclaimed the message and cast out demons throughout Galilee.

A day in the life of Jesus.

There are various directions we can go when we interpret this passage but this morning I want to take a few moments discussing the pattern Jesus is following in order to stay focussed in his ministry. You see, the temptation would have been for him to stay in the city of Capernaum and to bask in the attention the crowds were giving him. He and the disciples would have been tempted to develop a ministry in the city and become famous. Crowds were coming to him. There was much need there. But Jesus knew he had another ministry to perform and that was to spread the love of God to all the people of Galilee.

How did Jesus respond to this fame? How was he able to continue to minister to as many as possible and yet not be seduced by popularity? How would he keep his focus?

Mark gives us four clues. First, according to Mark's arrangement of the stories, scenes of ministry to crowds are followed by scenes of Jesus in private; this public-private pattern may say something not only about Jesus' willingness to serve but also about his need for physical and spiritual recovery. Second, Jesus spends time alone in prayer (v.35). His disciples see no reason to interrupt a popular tour with retreat and prayer, but Jesus knows otherwise. Third, Jesus moves on to minister to those who have not heard rather than to return to the applause of former ministries (v.38). And fourth, Jesus sought to silence those who would publicize his name and deeds. This call for silence was given to demons, to those whom he healed, and to his disciples. To say Jesus was using "reverse psychology," knowing that a prohibition to speak would produce the opposite result, is an inadequate explanation of Mark's portrayal of Jesus. Those who have travelled on the way with Jesus to Golgotha and the empty tomb know that for Mark, the confession of faith in Jesus that is complete and acceptable is at the cross (15:39). The confession of only one person who takes up the cross to follow Jesus means much more than the compliments of one thousand pushing and shoving in Galilee.

But the disciples do not understand. The first clue to their lack of understanding, which will eventually lead to such confusion and fear as to cause them to abandon Jesus, is given in the last verses of our passage. Jesus was at prayer in a deserted place. This "deserted place" reminds us of the testing of Jesus in the wilderness. This sudden popularity could offer for him a new kind of test. Simon and others hunted for him, found him, and interrupted with what they thought was good news--we have a big crowd waiting. In Mark, "searching" for Jesus usually refers to the efforts of those who would distract him (3:32; 8:11) or oppose him (11:18; 12:12; 14:1, 11, 55). The disciples were correct; there was a crowd, and that is all they saw or wanted to see. They did not yet understand the nature of Jesus' ministry and were unaware of the grounding and authority Jesus had in God. (*Preaching through the Christian Year B*; P. 96-97)

In these verses we receive a hint of where Jesus's authority comes from. It is because of his deep relationship with God, the creator. It is God who has chosen Jesus. Jesus's authority rests in God who proclaimed at Jesus's baptism, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). Yes, Jesus's authority comes from his close relationship with God, the father.

### **3. Credentialling**

This morning we have come not only to worship together, to give praise and honor to God our creator, to learn and strengthen our relationship with Jesus, and to receive direction and strength from the Holy Spirit. We have come to enter into a special covenant with Luke and to officially give him the authority to offer spiritual leadership to this church and to the community.

When MC Sask grants ministry credentials, we are saying the following (*Ministers Manual, 1998*; p.147-149, adapted):

- a. We confirm the call of God to the person being credentialled for ministry within or on behalf of the church. It is a time of celebration and blessing by the church for the gifts given by God.
- b. We affirm the person for the unique leadership gifts the ministry brings to the Christian community. We affirm a clarity of identity as shepherds of the church and servants of Jesus Christ.
- c. We recognize the person as a spiritual leader whose leadership grows out of an authentic spirituality disciplined by a life of prayer, contemplation, and the Scriptures.
- d. We entrust an office of ministry to the person being credentialled and we empower the person to represent the church.
- e. Lastly, we ask for mutual accountability of support, respect, and care between the congregation and the candidate.

“Credentialling” is a two-step process and begins with licensing. Licensing is temporary usually lasting one to two years. This is a time of continued testing and discernment for the candidate and the congregation to determine whether the candidate has the appropriate gifts for ministry. Licensing is also more local and the candidate is granted this authority within a congregation or in Luke’s case two—Osler Mennonite and Nutana Park Mennonite. After this initial period of licensing the candidate is eligible for ordination which is permanent and recognized by the nation-wide church, Mennonite Church Canada.

### **4. Discernment**

The task of ministry requires a grounding. Similar to Jesus there needs to be an assurance that this “authority” comes from God, from the congregation, and from the denomination.

The task of ministry also requires discernment as Jesus would have practiced. Kelsey Luke has written a brief devotional which appeared a month ago, January 4, in the *Rejoice* devotional booklet. She writes:

Discernment has frequented my prayers: choosing vocation, caring for friends in crisis, parenting as a single mom, or helping lead a church. My perception of discernment, however, changed when I learned that the word's origin suggests something like sifting. Suddenly, the process no longer seemed so tidy and passive. Discernment can be messy and dynamic. At times, the path forward seems clear. The star shines brightly, pointing at the destination. At other times our movement halts, and the next step is obscured.

What do we do then? What if the star disappears? What if it points toward the right region or the right moment but not the right door? What if I take the wrong step? We can learn a lot in times of waiting, but we also learn when we tentatively move forward, taking one shaky step at a time. Perhaps it's time to stand still, or perhaps it's time to take one more step, to put what you have in a sieve and shake it a bit.

Moving forward in uncertainty is scary, but as a mentor once said, "Maybe God's will is not a minefield." Hallelujah! The more I've looked for God in starless seasons, the more I've found these words to be true. In fact, the way I see it, if Jesus is our destination, all will shake out just fine in the end.

This is Kelsey Luke's experience.

Authority and discernment go hand in hand. Another illustration that can be helpful is that of hiking throughout the forest as the sun sets and the darkness settles around us. We do have a flashlight or perhaps a headlight which we have strapped on our foreheads. We no longer have the same range of sight because of the darkness. We can only see the short distance in front of us which is illuminated by our light but it is enough. There are times when we don't have that long distance vision but with the light we can see a few steps in front of us and because of our relationship with God it is enough.

Luke, as you and Osler Mennonite and Nutana Park Mennonite move forward in your relationship may you also be assured that God is present, that God can be trusted, that God guides with much love and grace.

Amen.

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**Litany of Licensing  
of *Luke Bushman*  
At Osler Mennonite Church  
February 4, 2024**

**Gary:** Brothers and sisters, filled with expectation and hope, we hear God say:

**All: You are my child, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.**

**Kirsten:** Like Jesus, we humbly submit ourselves to God, where our identity is confirmed, and our calling is received.

**Luke:** *Here, in the waters of baptism, our lives are transformed into ministers of God's grace.*

**All: Let us join together as ministers of God's healing, hope and peace.**

**Gary:** This morning we celebrate the unique intersecting of Luke's journey with that of both Osler Mennonite and Nutana Park Mennonite Churches. Believing that we have been guided by the Holy Spirit we gather to license Luke towards ordination, and to enter a covenant of mutual accountability.

Luke, do you renew the vows of your baptism, reaffirm your faith in Christ and your commitment to serve him?

**Luke:** *I Do.*

**Kirsten:** We recognize that ministry at Osler Mennonite Church and Nutana Park Mennonite Church is shared. Kevin and Gordon, as leaders in these congregations, do you offer yourselves to this mutual ministry, seeking to support each other with prayer and encouragement?

**Congregational Leaders:** **We do, with God's help.**

**Gary:** Osler Mennonite and Nutana Park Mennonite Church, do you reaffirm your faith in Jesus Christ and alongside Luke, agree to work together in living out God's kingdom of healing, hope and peace?

**Congregations:** **By the grace of God, we will. Luke, we are pleased to enter a covenant relationship with you, to work together with you for the good of this congregation and the larger church.**

**Luke:** *I promise to be faithful in my task here at Osler Mennonite Church, as God gives me strength and ability.*

**Congregations:** **We affirm you as Youth and Community Pastor and offer ourselves as partners on our journey together.**

**Gary:** Representing the extended church family of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, I value the partnership demonstrated here, and the promises made to be supportive. Luke, based on this covenant between these congregations and you, I license you towards ordination, committing them to your spiritual care and guidance, in the name of the Father, in the name of Son, and in the name of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Luke, preach the word and bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ, coming to us.

### **Laying on of Hands**

**Kirsten:** O God, bless the covenant that we have made as pastor and people. Ensure that all will be mutually shaped and molded by the generous exchange of the gifts that each brings to this church. Give Luke a discerning heart, confidence in your call, strength, and joy in the tasks of ministry and discernment set before him. May he stand firm. Make us partners with him in ministry, constant in support and prayerful in all things. Embrace and touch us with your favor and bind us together in the bond of peace. **Amen**