



SIX SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

*Christian Family Sunday*

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# THE COMMUNITY GATHERS

## APPROACHED TO GOD

Before the service, meditate and speak to God. During the service let God speak to you. After the service talk to each other and the wider community about God.

## KEYS

Words printed in **ALL CAPS & bold** are spoken or sung by everyone.

At places marked with the “✝,” you are invited to stand, as you are able.

## Functionaries

### On Piano

- Lindsay Lundquist

### Singer(s)

- Leona Harrison

### Reader(s)

- Suzanne Skinner

### Support Personnel

- 

### Videographer & Editor

- Franklyn James

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## Order of Worship

### INTROIT:

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF TERRITORY AND RECONCILIATION

As we gather today, we recognize that the first peoples lived here for countless generations before we did. We acknowledge that we are on the unceded traditional lands of the Splants'in First Nation, and we celebrate their faithful stewardship.

### WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENT!

### CENTERING HYMN

- **Come and Seek the Ways of Wisdom MV #10**

### LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: Creator, parent of the human family,

**People: we gather to worship you.**

One: In baptism, we are called beloved children of God, as such,

**People: we gather to worship you.**

One: Friends, neighbours, siblings in faith,

**People: we gather to worship in song, in prayer, in readings from your story/our story, in thoughts and reflections.**

One: Let us worship God.

## **OPENING HYMN: Bring Many Names VU #268**

### **OPENING PRAYER**

God, creator of us all, we gather to worship you.

We come as individuals, we come in family units, we come as neighbours and friends.

We come here where we are known by name, welcomed with all our fragilities and strengths. We gather with kindred spirits who long to live faithful to your calling. Guide us, inspire us, challenge us, comfort us, and nurture us in this time of worship so that we might be enabled to return to our daily lives ready to engage fully with all of your creation. **Amen.**

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

O God, you know how hard it is to live in relationships, and yet you call us to do so. At times it is hard to be fully present to our siblings and others in our nuclear family and within this Christian family.

Our patience may be short, we sometimes don't really listen,

we may be tired, or angry, or hungry, or lonely, or ... whatever it is that keeps us from loving and caring for one another, help us to know that you are always with us, loving us so that we may love others.

**Time of silence to offer personal thoughts and concerns**

### **WORDS OF FORGIVENESS & ASSURANCE [IN UNISON]**

**Through all the joys and all the struggles of living in relationship, one truth is offered to each and every one of us: God has loved us, is loving us and will always love us. Thanks be to God for this unending gift of love.**

## PRAYER/SONG OF ILLUMINATION: **Open Our Hearts MV #21**

### MINISTRY OF THE WORD

- **Psalm 98 VU, p. 818**
- **John 15:9-17**

*Reader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church today!!*

***People: We listen for the voice of God.***

### REFLECTION/SERMON

#### PRAYER

*Gracious God, give us humble, teachable, and obedient hearts, that we may receive what you have revealed, and do what you have commanded. Amen.*

When the Beatles sang those words in the turbulent 1960s, it generated two kinds of reactions.

- a. An enthusiastic embrace of love as the simple solution to the world's problem,
- b. And a critical rejection of love as a dreamy emotion that would distract people as those problems grew worse.

Those two attitudes toward love in some ways have marked all modern political culture.

- a. We have people today pleading for tolerance and asking, "Can't we all just get along?"
- b. While other demands a clear-eyed acknowledgement of, and a forceful response to the base motives and evil intent of others.

But despite the dominance of these two perspectives. Neither one finds much support in today's Gospel text. Jesus certainly praises love. It is a gift from God, excellence of character and a way of life.

On the other hand, the word love is highly ambiguous. It demands clarification. Jesus cannot just say, "Love one another", and leave it at that. He needs to describe this love and offer examples, and that he did.

- A. Keep my commandments – “to love one another.”
- B. Be selfless and sacrificial in serving others

*No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life  
for one's friends. - John 15:13*

Jesus' expectation of love as beautiful as love is, is reminding us that maybe we too often throw the word around lightly and is calling us to “**greater word care**”.

When we read John 15, we will quickly discern that the love Jesus is describing is not a psychological state it is not described as an internal quality, it is an action. It is a radical wiliness to self-sacrifice or even to die.

This self-sacrificial love is not only for a friend, family or loved ones but for people we don't know and the care of creation.....

On April 25, Earth Sunday we spoke about Bertha Caceres love for the earth, the water and other natural recourses. Her love was demonstrated in her acts of advocacy. She lost her life because of that sacrificial love on March 2, 2016.

In the not-too-distant past, we know of Martin Luther King, Jr selfless acts of love and service for “equal rights” for people. He too lost his life. We can name many others whose sacrificial love for God, humankind and all creation brought them discomfort, ridicule and harm.

They did not plan to undergo these difficulties but their love was too strong for them to leave the world entrenched in its **systemic injustices**, and **destructive actions against each other and creation**.

They embodied the love that Jesus commanded. They did not sacrifice only for their friends but also for those we may consider evil or sinners.

*<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person— though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. - Romans 5:6-8*

Another thing you may note is that the word that you hear at one time and place, can have an entirely different impact on you if you hear them at another time and place. For example. “I hope you are doing well” may seem like nothing more than a polite greeting in a casual conversation over the phone.

But the phrase has a much more focused meaning if it is spoken by a friend visiting you in the hospital. They are the same words. But they carry different resonance and different intensity and inflexion, meaning shifts with the setting.

This is an important principle to remember whenever we read Scripture because the words are always found in at least two different contexts. Take for example our passage in John 15,

- a. There is the immediate storyline, the unfolding narrative of Jesus and his ministry at the time of the writing of the text.
- b. And there is the community of John in its context about three generations later with their own set of circumstances.

Consider how the same words of Jesus sound in these two different contexts. In the face of his impending trials and death, Jesus said....

*No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. - John 15:13*

This verse leaps out at us as an interpretation of the sacrificial action Jesus is about to suffer.

But what happened if we read it in the context of the community of John, as it encounters an increase in conflict and persecution at the end of the first century.

The words no longer refer only to Christ and his sacrifice, but to the sacrifice of members of John's community.

We do not have to choose between one understanding over the other. By identifying both readings, we can understand how a life of faith keep expanding and deepening the meaning of Jesus' words.

It is a process that has kept the church vital and active for generation after generation, and it continues in our own lives today. **I leave you with the following questions when you read this text today, what is it saying to you?**

- ❖ What message do you get when you hear the words "love one another as I have loved you?"
- ❖ "I no longer call you servants but friend,"
- ❖ "Obey me as I obey the Father" and "You don't choose me, I choose you."

**Go now to love. Amen**

### **HYMN: Love Is the Touch MV #89**

#### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

God of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam; God of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus; God of siblings who cared for one another, offered support and challenge, celebrated together, worked together, argued together, and grieved together.

**People: We are thankful for their witness. As they have done may we also seek to live in life-giving relationships with those we would name as siblings.**

One: God of Eli, Hannah, and Samuel, cross-generational colleagues, mentors, and trusted leaders in faith, remind us of the opportunities we have to nurture and care, mentor and discern with one another in this faith community.

**People: May we embrace the trust that is offered and shared with respect, care, and humility.**

One: God of Ruth and Naomi, who embraced each other despite differences of race and cultural traditions and chose to be family for one another.

**People: For all who choose to be family, may your love and hope be sustained day by day.**

One: God of Simon and Andrew and James and John, who left the familiar to build new community with Jesus and his followers. Though faithful, they had moments of doubt, of fear, of denial.

**People: In our moments of doubt, fear, and denial, may we remember to trust and to take one step at a time.**

One: God of Hagar, Abraham, and Ishmael; God of Sarah, Abraham, and Isaac; God of the complicated, and the jealous, and the broken,

**People: remind us that this too is real and that you walk with us through these troubling times.**

One: God of Mary and John, called to relationships that stretch beyond blood, to care for one another.

**People: You invite us too to reach out in welcome, support, and care for one another.**

One: God of the past, God of the present, God of tomorrow, help us to live in relationships that seek justice, love kindness, and ground ourselves in your love for us. This we asked as we repeat a paraphrase of the prayer Jesus taught his disciples:

O Birther! Father- Mother of the Cosmos  
Focus your light within us - make it useful.  
Create your reign of unity now  
Through our fiery hearts and willing hands  
Help us love beyond our ideals  
and sprout acts of compassion for all creatures.  
Animate the earth within us: we then  
feel the Wisdom underneath supporting all.  
Untangle the knots within  
so that we can mend our hearts' simple ties to each other.  
Don't let surface things delude us,  
But free us from what holds us back from our true purpose.  
Out of you, the astonishing fire,  
Returning light and sound to the cosmos. Amen.

**CLOSING HYMN: Creator God, You Gave Us Life MV #27**

## THANK YOU & BLESSING

In baptism you name us your beloved children, kin to one another. As we go from this place, may we know your love that found expression in the most vulnerable of human form: guide us, sustain us, and empower us to love.

**DOXOLOGY: I Am the Light of the World (Ref, 3,4, Ref) VU #87**



## THANK YOUS & CREDITS

Thank you for participating in today's worship, I pray you have been greatly blessed.

Remember, for those we are unable to connect with for any reason; call to buoy up their spirits, and/or pray for them and entrust them to the care of the divine.

Rev. Franklyn James has sought a change in Pastoral Relationship. This means Rev. James will no longer be the minister of Zion United Church and St. Andrew's United Church as of June 30, 2021.

Due to physical distancing caused by the Corona Virus, COVID 19, all church activities that require physical contact are suspended until further notice.

## GIFTS & OFFERINGS

You may send us your gifts & offerings using the information below:

- Zion United Church @ to [zionunitedarmstrongbc@gmail.com](mailto:zionunitedarmstrongbc@gmail.com)
- St. Andrew's @ [standrewsunitedenderbybc@gmail.com](mailto:standrewsunitedenderbybc@gmail.com)
- Mission & Service Link: <https://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/get-involved/giving-opportunities>

Those of you who are on PAR and those who mailed in the gifts and offerings thank you.

We are always happy to hear your comments and queries. If you have prayer requests, you may use our social media message tabs or email them to [ministerfranklyn@gmail.com](mailto:ministerfranklyn@gmail.com)

Liturgy adapted from “Kin to one another” by Jackie Harper © 2018. The United Church of Canada/L’Église Unie du Canada. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial Share Alike Licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/ca>.

“The Lord’s Prayer”, from Aramaic into Old English Translation by G.J.R. Ouseley from The Gospel of the Holy Twelve

Sermon Resource: David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, Editors. "Feasting on the Word: Year B, Volume 2: Lent through Eastertide." Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press. (2008).

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## **MUSIC CREDITS**

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Words: Ruth Duck, 1993.

Music: Donna Kasbohm, 1995

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**Open Our Hearts - MV #21**

Words and music: Jim Strathdee;

French trans. David Fines, 2006

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**Love Is the Touch – MV #89**

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Music: John L. Bell, 1998

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**Creator God, You Gave Us Life – MV #27**

Words and music: Judith Snowdon, 2004

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