

WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

PRELUDE

WELCOME, TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

OPENING HYMN: *It's a Song of Praise to the Maker* MV 30 v. 1, 3, 4

It's a song of praise to the Maker; the thrush sings high in the tree.

It's a song of praise to the Maker; the gray whale sings in the sea.

And by the Spirit, you and I can join our voice to the holy cry
and sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.

It's a hymn of love to the Lover; the bumblebees hum along.

It's a hymn of love to the Lover; the Lenten breeze joins the song.

And by the Spirit, you and I can join our voice to the holy cry
and sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.

It's the chorus of all creation; it's sung by all living things.

It's the chorus of all creation; a song the universe sings.

And by the Spirit, you and I can join our voice to the holy cry
and sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLES FROM BOTH CONGREGATIONS

CALL TO WORSHIP:

One: Come! Let us gather our hearts, minds, and voices together in worship.

All: Physical distancing cannot separate us.

One: We are children of God – united by our love, faith, and interdependence.

All: We are never isolated because we are One.

One: I am you...

All: ...and you are me.

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One: And together we are the body of Christ.

Let us celebrate this coming together of community
with prayer and praise to God, our Creator.

OPENING PRAYER (unison):

Loving God,

these are such strange times.

So quickly, our daily lives have been disrupted.

So unexpectedly, we have had to deal with the unwelcome feelings of fear, anxiety, frustration, worry, and impatience that come with physical distancing.

Guide us through these challenging days;

Grant us strength and perseverance to navigate them with Grace.

Grant us gentleness so that we may walk through them with kindness towards ourselves and one another.

Grant us the peace that comes in knowing that our whole lives exist within You and your love.

For this day, for this hour, for this moment, we give You thanks.

Amen.

A TIME FOR ALL AGES

HYMN: *Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery*

VU 121 v. 1, 4th Sunday of Lent

Tree of Life and awesome mystery,

in your death we are reborn.

Thought you die in all of history,

still you rise with every morn.

Still you rise with every morn.

Give us eyes to see you clearly

make us children of your light,

give us hearts to live more nearly

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as your gospel shining bright,
as your gospel shining bright.

CENTERING

CONTEMPORARY READING by Valerie Kaur

My wish for you is stillness.

The cacophony of voices, the blistering pace of the news, the relentless barrage of commentary kills the root of our own wisdom, our ability to think clearly. It drives us to act on fear and panic – to hoard, to ban, to isolate, to self-protect, to act on racist impulses. But this is a time to gather the facts and then get quiet and summon our deepest wisdom – and let that wisdom lead us.

For we have difficult choices to make in the coming days. This pandemic will test who we want to be as a people. Will we succumb to fear and self-interest? **Or will we double-down on love?** Will we let social distancing isolate us? **Or will we find new ways to reach out, deepen our connections, step up community care and tend to the most vulnerable in our communities?** I believe this is a time to love without limit. This is a time to see no stranger. In doing so, we gather information for the kind of world we want, where no one is uninsured or disposable, where our policies and public institutions protect all of us.

And if panic or grief or rage seizes you suddenly, it's okay. **It means that you are alive to what is happening. The work is to breathe through it.** It becomes a dance – to panic, then return to wisdom; to retreat, then to find courage to show up and love anyway. I spent all day in fear. But tonight, I got quiet enough to hear the wise woman in me, and she said, "Breathe, my love. Like any long labour, we are going to take this one breath at a time." #BreatheAndPush (Posted: March 12, 2020)

GOSPEL READING: Luke 15:11-32 (NIV)

The Parable of the Lost Son

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired

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himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

REFLECTION BY REV. LAURA SUNDBERG

RESPONDING

HYMN: *Come and Find the Quiet Centre* **VU 374 v.1, 3**

Come and find the quiet center in the crowded life we lead,
find the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed.

Clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes that we can see –
all the things that really matter, be at peace and simply be.

In the Spirit let us travel, open to each other's pain,
let our loves and fears unravel, celebrate the space we gain.

There's a place for deepest dreaming, there's a time for heart to care,
in the Spirit's lively scheming there is always room to spare!

PRAYER FOR OTHERS AND OUR WORLD (unison):

God of abundance and healing, we pray with our hurting world.

We ask your blessing to be with those who are on the front-line and who are providing needed services to our communities: our healthcare workers and their support staff, grocery store clerks, pharmacists, delivery drivers, truckers, ministers, civic leaders, public health officials, homecare workers, shelter staff, food bank volunteers, chaplains, funeral home workers, and all those who are unnamed here but who are working hard for the health of the community – pour out your blessings, we pray.

We ask your blessing to be with all those who are ill or who are grieving. May they know the strength and comfort of your presence – pour out your blessings, we pray.

We ask your blessing to be with all those who were already marginalized and vulnerable before the advent of Covid-19: the homeless, street-involved youth, recent immigrants, single mothers, the Indigenous community, LGBT+ folk, people of colour, the differently-abled, and so many others – pour out your blessings, we pray.

We ask your blessing to be with all those who find themselves in precarious financial situations due to work closures, being laid off, being self-employed, or being dependent

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upon the gig economy. Help them to receive the resources they need to remain adequately housed and fed. For those facing poverty - pour out your blessings, we pray.

And now, in this quiet moment, we name all those whose lives and concerns we carry in our hearts... (*silence*)...

All this and so much more we lift up to you loving God, calling you by the name that feels most like home to us, we say the words you taught us and that we love to hear...

THE PRAYER OF JESUS:

Our Father/Mother/God/Creator... 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.

GO WITH GOD, GROW WITH GOD

HYMN: *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty* **VU 220 v. 1, 3, 4**

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty who rules all creation;
O my soul praise him, at all times your health and salvation.
Come all who hear: brothers and sisters draw near,
joining in glad adoration!

Praise to the Lord who will prosper our work and defend us;
surely her goodness and mercy will daily attend us:
ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
who out of love will befriend us.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore God!
All that has life and breath come now with praises before God!
Let the Amen sound from God's people again:
gladly with praise we adore God.

Joint Worship Service of Heritage United and St. James United Churches**COMMISSIONING:**

This week, you are encouraged to answer the following questions as part of your daily spiritual practice:

1. What am I grateful for today?
2. Who am I checking in on or connecting with today?
3. What expectations of “normal” am I letting go of today?
4. How am I getting outside today?
5. How am I moving my body today?
6. What beauty am I either creating, cultivating, or ‘inviting in’ today?
7. Where did I notice the love of God today?

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you now and forever. Amen.

CLOSING SONG: *In the Bulb There is a Flower* **VU703 v.1**

In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;
 in cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
 In the cold and snow of winter there’s a spring that waits to be
 unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

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