



## **South Cayuga Community Church**

**of The United Church of Canada**

Pastor Dawn Ballantyne, DLM

VAMs: Joan Willis, Rev. Bryan Melick

Pianist: Pastor Dawn

Music Leader: Joan Melick

*Sunday, Oct 1, 2023*

World Communion Sunday

### **Gathering Song**

***Come All You People***

***MV 2***

### **Welcome**

Welcome! Come and praise your Maker!!

Whatever your language, wherever you were born, welcome.

There's a place for you here!

**\*\*welcome, welcome, welcome (in different languages)**

We welcome you to worship on this World Communion Sunday. Whether you are watching and participating in this service on line or in person, in your own church or with others, we hope you will feel a connection with friend and stranger as we share, not only in worship together, but in Holy Communion.

If you are watching on line, and haven't already done so, you might wish to prepare your own elements for later in the service during the singing of our opening hymn. Use what you have on hand, perhaps bread and wine, or a cracker or muffin and juice. Just as Jesus would have used what he had at hand when he shared this meal with his disciples.

### **Territory Acknowledgement**

We are mindful of the many who, for millenia, have called this corner of Haldimand County home or depended on its trails for safe passage. We know this community as South Cayuga; it is also land named in the Haldimand Tract treaty, home to the Haudenosaunee people. May we be good and gracious stewards of this corner of Creation.

### **Lighting of the Christ candle**

And now, I invite you to take a deep breath, and invite the calming and centering spirit of the Holy One into our midst.

As is done in many churches across God's creation, we light a Candle as we begin worship.

This light reminds us that the love of Christ is ours to cherish and to share;

it reminds us that we are each beloved children of God - that this community encourages people to be themselves.

Every day we hold this light up against hate and fear.

We are a community that doesn't think the same, vote the same or love the same but we are trying our best to follow in the way of Jesus - the way of Compassion and Hope. A way surrounded by the cloud of witnesses.

### **Call to Worship**

In a world where wildfires and hurricanes are a part of daily newscasts, we ask

**Where is God?**

In our busy lives with the stress of daily living, the rising cost of food and shelter, we ask

**Where is God?**

In a world of conflict, and refugees, of displaced persons and homelessness, we ask

**Where is God?**

God is here, in creation, in homes and workplaces, in schools and playgrounds

**God is here,**

calling us to bring about a world of peace and of love

**God is here,**

Inviting us to be renewed through God's Word, to be renewed in the sharing of the bread and the cup

**God is here,**

Welcoming us into God's presence.

**Let us Worship God.**

### **Opening Prayer (in unison)**

**We come before you, Creator God, unable to fully understand the suffering of the people closest to us, let alone all around the world. Yet, on this World Communion Sunday, we stand side by side, heart to heart, with our siblings near and far, in this place and around the world. We are in awe of You and the healing work you call us to do. Yet we know how easily we give up or become discouraged, or just plain forget. Forgive us, God, and light a fire so deep within us that we burn with the same love and passion shown by your Son, Jesus. We pray in his name, Amen.**

### **Opening Hymn**

***Come In, Come In and Sit Down***

***VU 395***

### **Theme Time**

### **Orange Shirt video**

Recognizing (Orange Shirt Day) the National Day for Truth & Reconciliation is an exercise in HUMILITY, RESPECT, COOPERATION, and COMMITMENT.

+ with dumbbells,

What muscle am I exercising?

Biceps, triceps, wrist extensor & flexor, lats,

With squats – quads, hamstrings, glutes, abs and calves

Obliques

How do we exercise our brains? Jigsaw puzzles, crossword puzzles, Sudoku, learning a new skill, dancing

What happens when we exercise our muscles or our brains? They are strengthened.

What happens if we don't exercise our muscles? They atrophy. We lose ground.

How do we exercise our faith?

Praying, reading scripture, sharing in worship, singing hymns, sharing in communion

And today all around the world, Christians are exercising their faith by breaking bread around Christ's table. For 90 years, on the first Sunday of October, communities of faith worldwide have shared in the Lord's supper together to mark the most universal symbol and exercise of the Christian faith – remembering Jesus last supper with his disciples and remembering all that Jesus did and was and is; and that he is God's gift to each of us.

Because... God is awesome....

### **Children's Hymn**

***Awesome God***

***Our God is an awesome God  
He reigns from heaven above  
With wisdom, power and might  
Our God is an awesome God***

***Our God is an awesome God  
She's there with us always  
With comfort, care and love  
Our God is an awesome God***

***Our God is an awesome God  
Who calls us to Jesus' way  
Be bold and have courage  
Our God is an awesome God***

***Our God is an awesome God  
Who reigns from heaven above  
With wisdom, power and might  
Our God is an awesome God***

**Scripture                      Psalm 25:1-9 (NIV)**

In you, LORD my God,  
I put my trust.

<sup>2</sup> I trust in you;  
do not let me be put to shame,  
nor let my enemies triumph over me.

<sup>3</sup> No one who hopes in you  
will ever be put to shame,  
but shame will come on those  
who are treacherous without cause.

<sup>4</sup> Show me your ways, LORD,  
teach me your paths.

<sup>5</sup> Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God my Savior,  
and my hope is in you all day long.

<sup>6</sup> Remember, LORD, your great mercy and love,  
for they are from of old.

<sup>7</sup> Do not remember the sins of my youth

and my rebellious ways;  
according to your love remember me,  
for you, LORD, are good.  
<sup>8</sup> Good and upright is the LORD;  
therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.  
<sup>9</sup> He guides the humble in what is right  
and teaches them his way.

### **Philippians 2:1-13 (The Message)**

<sup>1-4</sup> If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you *care*—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.

<sup>5-8</sup> Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became *human*! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.

<sup>9-11</sup> Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth—even those long ago dead and buried—will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father.

<sup>12-13</sup> What I'm getting at, friends, is that you should simply keep on doing what you've done from the beginning. When I was living among you, you lived in responsive obedience. Now that I'm separated from you, keep it up. Better yet, redouble your efforts. Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God. That energy is *God's* energy, an energy deep within you, God himself willing and working at what will give him the most pleasure.

**Anthem**

**Put Peace Into Each Other's Hands**

**~ Joyful Noise**

**Reflection**

Now, if you were here two weeks ago you may remember my sermon *or* it may be easier to recall the children's time from two weeks ago.... – tug of war. The Gentile Christians and the Jewish Christians trying to pull each other to their respective sides over whether or not to eat meat and

whether or not to keep the Sabbath... and I said it's okay for us to agree to disagree. It's hard, but it's okay to do that.

Today we hear Paul saying, "Do me a favour, okay? And just agree. Just agree?!" This is why folks who read the bible often don't like the apostle Paul very much because he contradicts himself and makes us pull our hair out. Which is it? Are we supposed to disagree amicably or are we supposed to find consensus? Fortunately a little further along in the passage Paul says, "Just keep doing what you're doing." Okay. Well, we're currently disagreeing on some things. So let's stick with that – the right to disagree.

Because around the world, Christians are celebrating communion today but they're doing it in a lot of different ways because we can't all agree on how it should happen. In some churches only adults will be participating and here at South Cayuga, the children and youth will be coming back into the sanctuary to join us. In some churches there will be wine and everyone will drink from one big chalice and in others churches there will only be unleavened flat bread because they believe that's what it's supposed to be. But the United Church of Canada believes that Jesus used what was available to him in the moment and that that's what he would be happy with us using today and that Jesus invited everyone to his table and that's why we believe everyone is welcome at this table.

In Janet Gear's book, Undivided Love she talks about our belief system, our theology, what we believe and how we talk about God, being like a subway system.

"The urban imagination is able to picture an underground system of train routes. There are some tracks along which every train travels, but there are also trains running on tracks going in different, even opposite, directions. There are stations where one train may be disembarked and another boarded readily from the same platform, and there are stations where certain trains have never met. Such is the complexity of convictions, commitments, and confessions that lie beneath our denomination, indeed our Reformed Christian traditions as a whole." (1)

Perhaps easier for our rural imaginations would be more in tune with a map of beneath the forest floor. "Scientists have uncovered extensive below-ground networks formed between trees, fungi, and bacteria, which provide each species with the nutrients they need to thrive." Dr. Klein, an expert in this field is striving to explain the collaboration between plant life, fungi and bacteria beneath the forest floor to build a thriving community. "Rather than competing with each other as was once thought, organisms beneath the ground are doing something entirely different: cooperating. Large networks of symbiotic fungi, bacteria, and trees are supplying each other with the resources they need to thrive. Moreover, far from being simple individualistic organisms, plant species actually communicate with each other using a specific chemical language." Dr. Klein says that, "Research on the forest underworld is significantly changing our fundamental understanding of ecology and non-animal organisms." (2)

What's so interesting is that it can also significantly assist our understanding of Christianity and the church as well!

There are five operative theologies or understandings of living faith, particularly within The United Church of Canada but you can also recognize them within other denominations – some more obvious than others. Imagine them to be five different species of trees: maple, oak, evergreen, birch and poplar.

All these trees have similarities that we can see but it isn't until we go below the surface that we understand the differences. So what are the trees within the UCC or within Christianity that have deep roots running underground?

First there are the evangelical – the bearers of the good news; secondly are the ecclesial – anchored in the practice of liturgical and communal life; thirdly are the missional – those are the folks focused on looking outward, loving their neighbours; then comes the ecumenical – those who yearn to more

closely resemble the kingdom of God; and finally, the spiritual – those who are intentionally present to the holy.

Within this system, just as within the forest, there is no hidden hierarchy or judgement. One tree is not better or more important than other, they are just different and we look at the roots to understand better what leads to what's happening up top, above the surface.

Gear writes, "Though we are keen to understand the roots, we remember that we always begin with how faith is *lived*. By asking ourselves, "what is my faith most leading me to want to do?" (3)

What is my faith most leading me to want to do? That's your living theology. That's what kind of tree you are. Because we're not all the same. Some of us want to collect food and blankets for those in need, some of us want to chair the board or write policies and procedures, some of us want to attend protests and write letters, some want to sing in the choir and read scripture, some want to pray or go to yoga or sit with the sun on our face listening to the wind. What matters to us here in this church is that all the trees are valued and accepted as they are, understanding that together we are better and stronger, building a thriving community.

We're reminded today that we are part of an even bigger network of Christians – that we are part of a forest that spans the globe! That together we are exercising our faith this morning by partaking in communion with the rest of the world!

In London, England at the St. Paul's Cathedral is a round room called the Whispering Gallery. It's 'an architectural and acoustic masterpiece that enables whispered sounds to travel the full circumference of the cathedral dome. The story told there is that the whispered sounds never completely die but travel eternally in inaudible waves. Around the top of this round room are eight huge statues of early church figures. Using our imaginations we can overhear their whispered confessions – multiple overlapping, historically asynchronous, and ongoing conversations of the founders and early adapters of our faith. We know what they're saying – what their two-thousand year old conversations sound like because we are part of it! We are part of the conversation because we too, have living faith – have roots that run deep underground and show why it is that we do what we do. Our conversations are delivered in creeds and confessions, hymns and translations of scripture. From one generation to the next, their words are the texts, the containers for the living faith that we carry! Faith is infinitely larger than all of us – the believers here in this sacred space and those around the world today and those thousands of years ago, now honoured in stone at the cathedral in London. (4)

Faith grows in us and flows through us – like a river – a river of living water. May God's life-giving water quench our thirst so that we might continue the conversation, the whispering conversation that has been ongoing for thousands of years – that has different tracks and different root systems but that is intertwined and fed by the same source – the source of all that is good, all that is love – our Creator, our awesome God, our one-in-three and three-in-one.

(1) Gear, Janet. Undivided Love: Navigating Landscapes of Living Faith. Altona, MB: FriesenPress, 2022. p.22

(2) <https://www.weizmann.ac.il/WeizmannCompass/sections/features/the-secret-underground-life-of-trees>

(3) Gear, Janet. Undivided Love: Navigating Landscapes of Living Faith. Altona, MB: FriesenPress, 2022. p.26

(4) Gear, Janet. Undivided Love: Navigating Landscapes of Living Faith. Altona, MB: FriesenPress, 2022. p.17

## **Communion Hymn**

## ***One Bread, One Body***

**VU 467**

### **Communion**

The Lord be with you

**And also with you**

Lift up your hearts

## **We lift them up to the Lord**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

### **It is right to give our thanks and praise**

We come to this table, humbly part of a generations old conversation of faith, with our questions and our doubts about who God is and who we are – this conversation stretches all the way back to the beginning of Creation, to Creator itself; just as stardust is in our cells, faith is an echo of the ancient breath of Pentecost in our bodies. Faith is ours for as long as we ourselves have breath – a divine gift for us to hold in the little fragments of our days, ours to carry and be carried by. And so today we praise God together saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is the one  
who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

To speak of faith is to join a conversation larger and longer than any lifetime. It is to whisper into that dome, to add our voice to two thousand years of words within the Word. Let's find our place at the table where faith is the feast and all are welcome.

Just as throughout Jesus ministry, he welcomed everyone to his table. He called all the little children to his lap and he joined the misfits and outcasts and sinners to eat. Around a table that last night he gathered with his closest friends and he took a loaf of bread and broke it and said, "Take and eat – this is my body broken for you. Each time you do this, remember me." And then he took a cup and he filled it with wine and he held it up and said, "This is my blood, shed for you. Each time you drink it, remember me."

And so today, we have the bread life and the cup of blessing.

Here at this table we remember by living our faith – Jesus said,  
Remember me in bringing this Good news to the world  
Remember me in being the risen Body of Christ – the church  
Remember me in love of the stranger; acts of compassion  
Remember me - enacting hope for justice, peace and reconciliation.  
Remember me - in attentive relationship to the sacred in the ordinary  
And so today we exclaim together the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died,  
Christ is Risen,  
Christ will come again**

### **Prayer over the elements**

Send o God, your holy spirit amongst us and on these gifts of bread and wine, that we may taste your life story, to sit at table together in humble conversation, knowing faith's first language is life, and that you continue to offer us new life in Christ, through Christ and with Christ.

This is not the table of South Cayuga Community Church, this is not the United Church of Canada's table, this is the table of Jesus Christ, where no one is turned away. Whether this is your first time or your 1000th time, let us share this meal together.

Thanks be to God. Amen

### **Sharing the Elements**

The bread of life

The cup of blessing

### **Prayer After Communion**

**Gracious God, we thank you for the gift of Jesus, and for being with us here and always. We feel your presence in the meal we have shared. We experience your love in our hearts and in our lives. We celebrate this Communion meal with all your followers around the world. May we be strengthened to carry your love with us in all we think and do. And together we pray as Jesus prayed with his friends,**

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,  
forever and ever. Amen.

### **Announcements**

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Great Creator, we give thanks to you for the opportunity to gather as a church family here this morning to offer praise and thanksgiving to you and to join Christians around the world in communion and remembering the gift of your son Jesus, exercising our faith. We give thanks for the gifts of this church, for all those folks who give of their time and talents and for the financial gifts, given weekly in the offering plate and monthly by PAR, to ensure the function of this ministry and the mission of The United Church of Canada. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



**Blessing & Sending Forth**

Just as others around the world have been nourished this day,  
by the bread and the cup,  
we too have been nourished by this Holy Sacrament.

Let us go now from this place, renewed in spirit,  
reconnected with God's people everywhere.

Let us go, strengthened by our Communion meal,  
Committed to service in Jesus name,

Safe in the love of God,  
the grace of Jesus and  
the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen

***Go Now In Peace***

Go now in PEACE, never be afraid  
God will go with you each hour of ev'ry day,  
Go now in FAITH, steadfast, strong and true,  
Know God will guide you in all you do.  
Go now in LOVE, and show you believe,  
Reach out to others so all the world can see.  
God will be there, watching from above.  
Go now in PEACE, in FAITH, and in LOVE  
Amen Amen Amen

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Song # 274763 South Cayuga Pastoral Charge, CCLI: 1504619