



## **South Cayuga Community Church**

**of The United Church of Canada**

Pastor Dawn Ballantyne, DLM

VAMs: Joan Willis, Rev. Bryan Melick

Pianist: Wendy Willis

Music Leader: Donna Wylie

*Sunday, Oct 15, 2023*

### **Welcome**

### **Territory Acknowledgement**

As we gather, we humbly acknowledge that Haldimand County sits on the ancestral land of many generations of Indigenous nations, who have been here since time immemorial.

Today, this land continues to be home to many Indigenous peoples, including the Six Nations of the Grand River and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, as well as non-Indigenous settlers from a variety of backgrounds. As a community, we have a shared responsibility for stewardship of the land on which we live and work. We are grateful for the opportunity to work together and to share the land we all call home.

Acknowledging reminds us that our living conditions are directly related to the abundant resources of the Indigenous peoples. We commit to continue learning, reflecting on our past, and working in allyship with Indigenous communities, toward respective community goals and objectives, in peace, respect and friendship.

<https://www.haldimandcounty.ca/about-haldimand-county/land-acknowledgement/>

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

We live in a time of turmoil and hostility and anxiety. May the light of this candle remind us of God's presence with us always – grounding us, guiding us, comforting us.  
May this light be our peace – particularly in the face of hate and fear.

### **Call to Worship**

May we feel the Spirit here in this place this morning.  
May the Holy Spirit strengthen our connection to one another and may God's peace permeate our hearts and fill us so that when we leave this hour of praise, we might overflow wherever we go, spilling seeds of God's love and peace into the dust and dreariness of this world.

### **Opening Prayer**

We come to worship you, Creator God, who created us in goodness.

**In the midst of the evils and greed of the world, remind us of your goodness.**

We come to worship you, O God, who created a world of abundance.

**When people live as if there is only scarcity, remind us of your abundance.**

We come to worship you, Loving God, who created a world for peace and compassion.

**When we experience and witness violence, show us the way back to your peace and healing.  
Amen.**

**Theme Time**

I'm wondering how you are this morning... Are you fine? Are you sad? Are you anxious?

How does a dog tell you it's sad? How about happy? How about anxious?

What about a cat?

How does a baby let you know they're feeling sad? Happy?

I wonder if you can choose a puppet and then show us what happiness looks like? I want you to see if you can make folks in the congregation smile or even laugh...

We are all part of God's creation – we are all God's children and God cares about how we're feeling and wants to know how we're feeling. And God wants us to be happy and joyful – understanding that we can't be happy all the time and we don't have to be – that God wants to know how we're feeling no matter what. We don't have to hide our angry feelings or our sad feelings – God loves us always and is always with us.

**Children's Hymn*****Dance with the Spirit******~ Joyful Strings*****Scripture****Isaiah 25:1-9**

LORD, you are my God;

I will exalt you and praise your name,  
for in perfect faithfulness  
you have done wonderful things,  
things planned long ago.

<sup>2</sup> You have made the city a heap of rubble,  
the fortified town a ruin,  
the foreigners' stronghold a city no more;  
it will never be rebuilt.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore strong peoples will honor you;  
cities of ruthless nations will revere you.

<sup>4</sup> You have been a refuge for the poor,  
a refuge for the needy in their distress,  
a shelter from the storm  
and a shade from the heat.

For the breath of the ruthless  
is like a storm driving against a wall

<sup>5</sup> and like the heat of the desert.

You silence the uproar of foreigners;  
as heat is reduced by the shadow of a cloud,  
so the song of the ruthless is stilled.

<sup>6</sup> On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare  
a feast of rich food for all peoples,  
a banquet of aged wine—  
the best of meats and the finest of wines.

<sup>7</sup> On this mountain he will destroy  
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,  
the sheet that covers all nations;

<sup>8</sup> he will swallow up death forever.  
The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears  
from all faces;  
he will remove his people's disgrace  
from all the earth.  
The LORD has spoken.  
<sup>9</sup> In that day they will say,

"Surely this is our God;  
we trusted in him, and he saved us.  
This is the LORD, we trusted in him;  
let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

### **Philippians 4:1-9**

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

<sup>2</sup> I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. <sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

### **Hymn** **Reflection**

### ***In Suffering Love***

### ***VU 614***

The scriptures for today are pretty positive – pretty upbeat – rejoice in the Lord always, rejoice, I say, rejoice! They're in absolute contrast to the world today, the news this week... and even the Gospel lesson which I didn't have anyone read today – it's the parable of the wedding banquet. And no, not the one where Jesus turns water into wine – the one from Matthew 22:1-14 entitled, "Violence at the wedding banquet" where the king sent servants to collect those who'd been invited to the wedding but no one wanted to come so some of the invitees went out to the fields and others to their business and then the rest murdered the king's servants. So the king sent his army to kill the murderers and then invite anyone from the village who wanted to come to the wedding. Only then at the wedding with all the folks enjoying themselves the king went out and found one man not wearing proper wedding clothes and he had his attendants tie the man's feet and hands and throw him outside where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth!

Which actually might be a more fitting story for today. I mean we've got wars happening around the world – hot spots all over including the ongoing war in Ukraine and now also a war in Israel; a war that has been ongoing for thousands of years and yet has erupted once again with

horrific destruction including the death and forced immigration of thousands of people. My friend Rev. Maya who was here four years ago for our covenanting service and her dad was here this past June for anniversary – Maya was supposed to leave for Israel on Thursday for a two week pilgrimage to the Holy land with some other United Church ministers – what if she'd left a week earlier? What if Air Canada hadn't cancelled their flight? It seems like a far away problem until it hits close to home.

On Facebook I follow a "B" list celebrity named Lauren Brovarnik. Her husband Alex is from Israel. She is sharing online about their heartbreak – that thankfully their friends and family in Israel are safe at the moment but they're scared. My friend Carrie who I went to high school with, shared a documentary this week about Palestine – what it was like in the 1920's with port and railway trade routes; universities and elite schools and how it was a thriving centre of the Middle East. She's shared information for Doctors Without Borders and UN Charity for Humanitarian Aid. And it all just hits a little closer when there's a personal connection.

The Hamilton Spectator this week reported that \$93.5 million dollars have been allocated to help the city's homeless population and the mayor is really happy about it. It's great news. That money will build 2,600 units. But there are 6,110 people on the waiting list for housing. That money is a drop in the bucket. Hamilton changed its bylaws this past August to allow encampments and tent cities to exist - because they had to! Because there aren't enough shelter beds and temporary housing to hold all the people living on the street. How many people here in our own community are one pay cheque away from losing their accommodations? One vehicle break down; one unexpected expense, from being out on the street? What can we do?

It's such a hopeless, helpless feeling. Like rain on Thanksgiving. How can a weary world, our weary hearts rejoice when there is so much turmoil and devastation surrounding us? Violence, wars, homelessness, so many people displaced...

I invite you to consider these words from Mary Oliver entitled, "Heavy"

That time  
I thought I could not  
go any closer to grief  
without dying

I went closer,  
and I did not die.  
Surely God  
had his hand in this,

as well as friends.  
Still, I was bent,  
and my laughter,  
as the poet said,

was nowhere to be found.  
Then said my friend Daniel  
(brave even among lions),  
"It is not the weight you carry

but how you carry it—  
books, bricks, grief—  
it's all in the way  
you embrace it, balance it, carry it

when you cannot, and would not,  
put it down."  
So I went practicing.

Have you noticed?

Have you heard  
the laughter  
that comes, now and again,  
out of my startled mouth?

How I linger  
to admire, admire, admire  
the things of this world  
that are kind, and maybe

also troubled—  
roses in the wind,  
The sea geese on the steep waves,  
a love  
to which there is no reply?

It takes strength to find joy in improbable times. Paul says in his letter to the Philippians, that Grant read for us this morning, "Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near." God is near. So may we be gentle with ourselves – with our tender hearts; and with those we encounter in the world. We don't necessarily know the struggles or the stories of those we encounter. Regardless we are called to reflect the light and love of Jesus.

John Mark Green said, "Do we dare to dream of better days ahead while holding on to hope's slender thread? Do we dare to believe the hints and clues as signs align for an awaited breakthrough? Dark days may come, this much is true. But if bad things happen, then good can too."

The apostle Paul goes on to say, "the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

God is not detached from our suffering, from the emotions that we as humans experience. The God who created us, who loves us, who saves us, who nurtures and cares for us, also participates in our suffering and pain.

God Weeps is a hymn written in 1994 that is remarkably expressive of today's tragedies and Donna and Wendy are going to sing it for us this morning. May these words be a balm for your weary hearts.

<https://united-church.ca/news/united-church-canada-calls-immediate-ceasefire-israel-and-palestine>  
<https://thespec.pressreader.com/article/281526525709641>  
<https://www.readpoetry.com/mary-oliver-poems-for-grieving-hearts/>

## **Anthem**

## ***God Weeps***

## ***MV 78***

## ***~ Donna W. & Wendy***

### **"Where Is God?" A Pastoral Prayer**

Faithful God, it is easy to cry "Where is God in the world?" as disease disrupts lives and illness induces grief and pain.

**Help us to encounter you, O God, in the dedication of nurses and doctors, in the wonder of science and research. Help us to serve you by comforting those who suffer and accompanying those in distress.**

It is easy to cry "Where is God in the world?" as war and violence spread fear and entrench hostility.

**Help us to notice you, O God, in unexpected bonds of peace and in the provision of refuge, food, and shelter. Help us to serve you by confronting aggression and the abuse of power and by protecting those displaced by conflict.**

It is easy to cry "Where is God in the world?" as racism diminishes our society and prejudice fuels distrust.

**Help us to experience you, O God, in the friendships that bridge cultural divides and through the allies that advocate for those who are exploited. Help us to serve you by adding our voices to calls for justice and by replacing suspicion with a desire for understanding.**

It is easy to cry "Where is God in the world?" as hopes are dashed and dreams delayed.

**Help us to discover you, O God, in the small moments of each day that remind us of your persistent love for us. Help us to serve you with welcoming hearts and acts of compassion, sharing your love in the world around us.**

All this we pray in Jesus' name who lived and loved as one of us. God in the world, we praise you now and forever. Together we pray,

Gill Le Febvre, Walton Memorial U.C., Oakville, Ont.  
The Gathering, Pentecost 2 2023 (Year A)  
Used with permission.

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kindom 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**

Holy God, thank you for the opportunity to gather together as your people; to praise and worship you and to lament to you as well. Thank you for accepting us and loving us just as we are, wherever we are on our faith journeys and with whatever emotions and feelings linger in this moment, we trust that you are happy to hold them and us.

We give thanks for all who work to keep this church family going; thank you for bringing such a diverse group of people together and for giving us each unique talents that we can share for your glory. We also give thanks for the generosity of this church family and we ask your blessing upon each giver – those who share their talents and those who share financially and those who share both. We ask your blessing upon the monies this community of faith receives that they might be used for your glory. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

## **Closing Hymn**

*What a Friend We Have in Jesus*

**VU 664**

## **Sending Forth**

I'd like to leave you this morning with these words from John Roedel (love is bigger than war)

I can't make the world be peaceful  
I can't stall tanks from roaring down roads  
I can't prevent children from having to hide in bunkers  
I can't keep a madman from creating heartbreaking headlines  
I can't convince the news to stop turning war into a video game  
I can't silence the sound of bombs tearing neighbourhoods apart  
I can't turn a guided missile into a bouquet of flowers  
I can't make a warmonger have an ounce of empathy  
I can't convince diplomats to quit playing truth or dare  
I can't deflect a sniper's bullet from turning a wife into a widow  
I can't stave off a schoolyard being reduced to ash and rubble  
I can't do any of that the only thing I can do  
    Is love the next person I encounter  
Without any conditions or strings  
To love my neighbour  
So fearlessly that it starts a ripple  
That stretches from one horizon to the next  
I can't force peace on the world  
But I can become a force of peace on the world  
Because sometimes all it takes  
Is a single lit candle in the darkness  
To start a movement

Oh, Spirit, let me be a candle  
Of comfort in this world  
Let me burn with peace

So as I extinguish the Christ candle I remind you that the light never truly goes out. It continues to burn deep within us, the spirit dances and dwells inside us and among us – the light goes with us, tucking into our pockets and blowing out the cracks in the windows and out the doors. Go and be a channel of love; a force of peace in this weary world.

### ***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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