



## **South Cayuga Community Church**

**of The United Church of Canada**

Pastor Dawn Ballantyne, DLM

VAMs: Joan Willis, Rev. Bryan Melick

Pianist, Joan Melick

Music Leader: Donna Mulder

*Sunday Feb 4, 2024*

### **Welcome**

Good morning and welcome! Welcome to those of you who are here in the sanctuary and to those who are joining us online! Whoever you are and wherever you are at along your faith journey, we're so glad you've chosen to worship with us this morning!

### **Gathering Song**

*I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing*

*~Joyful Strummers*

### **Territory Acknowledgement**

I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony... some days that feels closer than others. But we know that each step we take along our life journeys, along the road to reconciliation, is a step in the right direction. And so we take time each Sunday morning to acknowledge the land upon which we are gathered, as land long stewarded by the Haudenosaunee people. One day, may we stand hand in hand and enjoy peace throughout this land.

### **Lighting the Christ Candle**

Jesus, light of the world, showed us a glimpse of that possibility; of harmony, of God's kin-dom come. We light the Christ candle as a visible reminder of the Son who came and dwelt among us, telling amazing stories, performing magnificent miracles and calling us all to love God by loving our neighbours here on earth.

### **Call to Worship (Based on Psalm 147)**

**"How good it is to sing praise and give honor to our God!"**

Sing to the Creator with thanksgiving.

Make music upon the harp.

How good it is to celebrate God's presence

and sing praise throughout each day!

**How good it is to sing praise and give honor to our God!**

Our God rebuilds the people of earth.

The wandering ones are gathered together,

the brokenhearted are healed,

the hungry are fed,

the prisoners are freed,

the blind are given sight, the lonely are befriended.

**How good it is to sing praise and give honor to our God!**

All of nature sings aloud God's goodness—

clouds, rain, grass, creatures great and small.

Our God creates and sustains our world

with God's ever-growing, never-ending love.

**How good it is to sing praise and give honor to our God!**

Grace and peace be yours in abundance  
through the knowledge of God and of Christ Jesus our Lord.  
**Amen.**

Words by Rev. Donald Jansma. <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/09/call-to-worship-litany-psalm-147.html>

### **Opening Prayer**

Loving and merciful God we come before you with thanksgiving and with humble hearts. We ask your blessing upon us who have gathered to pray and sing and listen – and we ask that you would open us up to hear what you would have us hear today. In your grace, lead us along the road to reconciliation and harmony with all of your creation, people and earth. Amen.

### **Opening Hymn**

#### ***Called by Earth and Sky***

**MV 135**

### **Theme Time**

*As the children and I are repairing something...*

I wonder if you have ever broken anything? Have you ever fixed anything?

Have you ever had a broken heart?

What does it feel like to have a broken heart?

How do you fix a broken heart?

How can we heal others' broken hearts?

How can we be like glue or tape?

We can work together, just like we've worked together to fix this heart to love folks with broken hearts – to love our family, friends, neighbours and all the world.

When you go to Sunday school in a few minutes you're going to hear a story about Jesus who helped fix up a lady, Simon's mother-in-law. She didn't have a broken heart but she was sick in bed with a fever. Who's ever been sick in bed with a fever? It feels yucky, right? So Jesus made her feel better. And then at sunset a whole bunch of sick people showed up at the house where Jesus was and he made them all feel better too. And then he went off to pray by himself. Later when his friends found him, he told them that they'd better get going to all the other towns around so that Jesus could help more people feel better and teach them about God's love.

Now we're going to sing a song about what the Bible says we should do – to show our love for God and to help heal the world...

The prophet Micah said,

And what does the LORD require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly<sup>g</sup> with your God.

So that's what we're going to sing.



### **Children's Hymn**

#### ***What Does the Lord Require of You***

**VU 701**

### **Scripture**

**Psalm 147:1-11, 20c**

Hallelujah!

It's a good thing to sing praise to our God;

praise is beautiful, praise is fitting.

<sup>2-6</sup> GOD's the one who rebuilds Jerusalem,

who regathers Israel's scattered exiles.

He heals the heartbroken

and bandages their wounds.

He counts the stars

and assigns each a name.

Our Lord is great, with limitless strength;

we'll never comprehend what he knows and does.

GOD puts the fallen on their feet again  
and pushes the wicked into the ditch.  
7-11 Sing to GOD a thanksgiving hymn,  
play music on your instruments to God,  
Who fills the sky with clouds,  
preparing rain for the earth,  
Then turning the mountains green with grass,  
feeding both cattle and crows.  
He's not impressed with horsepower;  
the size of our muscles means little to him.  
Those who fear GOD get GOD's attention;  
they can depend on his strength.

19-20 He speaks the same way to Jacob,  
speaks words that work to Israel.  
He never did this to the other nations;  
they never heard such commands.  
Hallelujah!

### **Micah 6:8**

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the LORD require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly<sup>[a]</sup> with your God.

### **Reflection "The Ecumenical Banquet Table"**

Over the past three weeks, we have experienced faith expressed as the messengers of good news – the evangelicals – we represented them here on the communion table, with the cross and crown of thorns; secondly were the members of Christ's body, the church – represented by the cup and bread – the ecclesials among us. And last week we added the bowl, towel and pitcher as symbols of compassion for the 'servants of the stranger' – those who live out their faith as missionals.

This morning we are taken up in the faith of those who long for the kin-dom of God, the justice-seekers – those we are calling the ecumenicals and we've added a globe to the table. According to author of Undivided Love, Rev. Janet Gear, the ecumenicals, "those whose way of being Christian, of being human, whose way of faith and of loving God, is to allow the world's pain to demand their attention and to keep it... Who is voluntarily standing in that painful gap between the status quo and the flourishing of life? Whose lived faith stirs them in the direction of longing for what *could* be, for what *should* be? Who is animated by their faith both to see the social inequity and global suffering we swim in, and to seek elusive solutions to the terrible tangle of it all?" (1) These are the ecumenicals.

If we think back to the missionals of last week – the ones who work with their hands and feet – *doing* – the ecumenical have evolved out of the missionals – but rather than simply offering assistance to that one person in need – the ecumenical is interested in the root cause of that person's ailment – the ecumenical is more interested in the systemic questions... these are the people who are behind the scenes working for change within our broken systems. Gear writes, "ecumenicals include former moderators, denominational women's organization presidents, Indigenous leaders, mission partners, youth and young adults, along with innumerable lay and ordered committee members and delegates who advocate in countless local, national, and international fora vision of the future that in a material, this-worldly way is reflective of the peaceable kin-dom announced by the prophets – a peace inextricably linked to justice, reconciliation, well-being, health, and the integrity of all life on the planet. They are academics and activists, privileged and disadvantaged, professional and on the edges of the economy, bold and meek, all of them compassionate, courageous, and willing to be scrutinized by Jesus' version of the kin-dom." (2)

Before we go any further – let's play a game. Who said it?

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. I have a dream today!"

~ Martin Luther King Jr.



"I would like to be remembered as a person who wanted to be free... so other people would also be free."

~ Rosa Parks (invigorated the struggle for racial equality when she refused to give up her bus seat to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama.)



"When they go low, we go high."

~ Michelle Obama (she was talking about bullies in this quote – she is also passionate about childhood obesity and in 2010 launched a program called "Let's move!" aimed at encouraging children to be more physically active, to provide healthier foods in schools and urging companies to market healthier foods to children.)



Those are all examples of people whose lived faith is ecumenical – they were and are concerned about the bigger picture – not just their own family or situation – but the greater good. And the other thing that comes into play is integrity. They live what they preach.

And they're all of African descent. The first week of February marks the beginning of Black History (or African Heritage) Month. Officially recognized in Canada since 1996, this is a time to honour the contributions and struggles of peoples of African descent.

Let's continue with our game...

"This we know: the earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."

~*Chief Seattle* (born in 1786 – June 7, 1866) was a leader of the *Suquamish and Duwamish Native American tribes in what is now Washington state*)



"I am from this land. My ancestors are buried here on this land. This land is our land and it's part of me and part of everything I am and everything I do."

~ Autumn Peltier (is the Chief Water Commissioner for the Anishinabek Nation and an Indigenous Rights & Water activist whose journey for justice has made waves around the globe. Peltier captivated the world's attention at the age of 12 when she admonished Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, at an Assembly of First Nations event, for the choices he had made for her people and lack of support. She spoke her mind which led him to make her a promise, "I will protect the water." It's that promise to which she holds him accountable still today.)





“That kind of butts up against the reality of politics. And I think if I learned anything while I was in Ottawa, it’s hard to be one of those people who is pushing for change. That is, being an ‘inbetweeners,’ or being uncomfortable, that’s the only way to actually make change. I don’t regret one minute of the time that I was there.”

~ Jody Wilson-Raybould (a Canadian lawyer, author and former politician; former minister of justice and attorney general – she wrote the books “Indian in the Cabinet” and more recently, “True Reconciliation”)



And it’s in her latest book, “True Reconciliation” that Wilson-Raybould coins the term “inbetweeners” – she uses it similarly to the word “ally” but whereas an ally is someone who stands in solidarity with a person or group of people who are oppressed – Wilson-Raybould suggests that inbetweeners are more than that – they are people who are willing to be a bridge between people from all walks of life. (3)

Which is another way to describe the ecumenicals in our congregation and in our greater church. They are the folks who are dedicated to “the well-being of the whole inhabited earth and *collectively* and *inclusively* engaged in trying to bring that well-being about.” (4)



Also, Chief Seattle, Autumn Peltier and Jody Wilson-Raybould are all Indigenous people. And I selected them because February is also Indigenous Languages Month in the North West Territories. Here in Ontario in addition to being Black History Month this month also includes Groundhog Day, Valentine’s Day and Family Day, Fat Tuesday or Mardi Gras, Ash Wednesday and Pink Shirt Day, a day to raise awareness about bullying, on February 28th. The Canadian Mental Health Association is encouraging everyone to join the push for better mental health by participating in the 200 push-up challenge this month, as well!

Now, I didn’t see it happen.. but if you rolled your eyes when I mentioned Black History Month or Indigenous Languages Month or Pink Shirt Day – you are not an ecumenical. And that’s okay – the ecumenical are the smallest group within our congregation and The United Church of Canada – a lot of them are probably employed by the denomination, at the General Council office and they’re the ones announcing the importance of recognizing and honouring this cause or that one because they are focused on affecting the big picture – they want to be part of the change.

Okay, back to our game; just a couple more...

“The creation God loves is sick unto death, and needs caretakers, lovers, gardeners, companions and partners who will work to preserve life rather than death, collective security rather than national security, rice in the mouth and a roof over the head rather than military and nuclear hardware.”

~ Lois Wilson (retired United Church minister and the first female moderator of The United Church of Canada from 1980-1982)



“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better, it’s not.”

~ The Lorax (a Dr. Seuss character from the book and movie of the same name - a caring creature who loves the environment.)



The Lorax isn’t just looking out for himself in the story. He’s concerned about all the forest animals and tries to warn them that cutting down the trees is bad for the environment and could affect the entire world.

The Lorax and Rev. Lois Wilson are two more examples of ecumenicals inviting us to take *notice*. Our instinct is to surround ourselves with people like us, people who think like us and act like us and whom we know like us. But the ecumenicals invite us to come together in dialogue for the greater good – for the healing of the world. Living out their faith means that they are part of movements and campaigns; protecting watersheds or wearing pink t-shirts, learning what reconciliation means or marching for the rights of women, painting the rainbow or advocating for Palestinians – these are the activities that demonstrates a faith firmly planted in the hope for God’s reign and the desire to live God’s vision of shalom, God’s kin-dom here on earth – harmony; where we are hand and hand and there is peace throughout the land.



“And what does the LORD require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God.”

~ the prophet Micah



The ecumenicals are showing us what it means to act justly, love mercy and to walk humbly with God and they're holding out their hands and inviting the rest of us to join them.

Thanks be to God for the "future-leaning, hope-seeking, change-making people of God" (5) that we call the ecumenicals; who "embody little pockets of the kin-dom" (6) and who are willing to situate themselves "in the gap between the realities of these times and that which, in Christ has been promised and begun." – the inbetweeners showing us what it means to build a bridge between all that divides us so that we might reach one another's hands to not only stand side by side but that we might collectively, as a society, help one another up.(7)  
Amen.

(1) Gear, Janet. Undivided Love: Navigating Landscapes of Living Faith. Altona, MB: FriesenPress, 2022. p.145.

(2) Gear, Janet. Undivided Love: Navigating Landscapes of Living Faith. Altona, MB: FriesenPress, 2022. p.146.

(3) <https://chatelaine.com/living/jody-wilson-raybould-reconciliation/>

(4) Gear, Janet. Undivided Love: Navigating Landscapes of Living Faith. Altona, MB: FriesenPress, 2022. p.148.

(5) Gear, Janet. Undivided Love: Navigating Landscapes of Living Faith. Altona, MB: FriesenPress, 2022. p.154.

(6) Gear, Janet. Undivided Love: Navigating Landscapes of Living Faith. Altona, MB: FriesenPress, 2022. p.157.

(7) Gear, Janet. Undivided Love: Navigating Landscapes of Living Faith. Altona, MB: FriesenPress, 2022. p.157.

## **Hymn**

## ***For the Healing of the Nations***

**VU 678**

## **Prayers of the People**

*Mindful of the privacy act, I invite you to shout out to me – first names only – of folks you would like us to pray for today... no personal stories or last names – just first names...*

Loving and gracious God we come before you with praise and thanksgiving, grateful to be gathered safely in this warm and sacred space, conscious of those who are unable to openly confess their love and devotion to you for fear of violence. Holy God, there are so many things that divide us in this world and we come before you now, longing for your kin-dom come – for your will be done – that we might live together in peace and harmony. And until that day God, we honour your call to us to love you by loving our neighbour.

This morning we lift up to you those who are different than us, those whom we struggle to love, those with whom we disagree – help us to join in conversations and to take advantage of opportunities you show us where we can reflect your light and love. We pray for those who are consumed by darkness – those who are unkind and unjust and mean; those who are more interested in power than people – shine your love into their hearts. Holy God, we pray for those whose darkness is fear and anxiety and worry and loneliness and we pray that your light might shine brighter that they might find comfort and peace and hope in you. We pray for those who are listed on South Cayuga Community Church's prayer list – we pray for healing and wholeness for each name written there and also for those whose names are written on our hearts. In a moment of silence we bring before you now, Almighty Creator – those names and situations of whom we know are in need of you today...

Holy God, Loving Parent we pray for:



God we know that you know us so well – you know our names – you know the number of hairs on our heads – and you know the needs of all those we have prayed for this morning. We trust that you hold them in the palm of your hand. May they be wrapped in your loving embrace – trusting that they are loved and remembered and never alone. When Jesus left his disciples he told them that they would not be alone, that he was going but that he was sending an advocate – the Holy Spirit to uphold and strengthen them. And we give thanks for that gift of the Holy Spirit, the promise that Jesus walks beside us and for the familiar words that we pray each week...

### **The Lord's Prayer**

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 Hymn**

***Draw the Circle Wide***

***MV 145***

#### **Sending Forth**

God is forever and always healing, reconciling and restoring the world.  
So go forth inspired by those whose lived faith is to love God through the way things are;  
Every moment there are folks who are standing in the gap between what is and what could be...

Go forth comforted and reassured; you are a child of God.  
And God is with us. We are never alone. Thanks be to God.

***When You Walk from Here***

***VU 298***

When you walk from here, When you walk from here,  
Walk with justice, walk with mercy,  
and with God's humble care.