

November 23, 2025 - Reign of Christ Sunday & 7th Anniversary

Welcome Welcome! Welcome into the midst of this faithful congregation, celebrating its seventh Anniversary of its current unitedness, but also commemorating the decades and members of our predecessor churches, years and an abundance of faith, service, and following our loving Creator God.

Announcements

Creation Connection New shepherds. New songs. A peaceable kingdom. New splendour. The scriptures of the last weeks proclaim that God continues to create and to shake things up, bringing joy and delight. Can we hold these promises in our discouraged hearts?

Lighting of the Christ Candle

L: "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:14–16)

P: **We light the Christ candle, reminding us that God's light shines among us and we are called to carry that light into the world.**

Gathering Prayer *This beautiful opening prayer was written by my beautiful, good friend, and art teacher at WESS, Ruthanne McLagan. Ruthanne taught at WESS for many years, and so many students were deeply inspired by her teaching, character, and strong faith. She was a member of Calvary UC in London and was studying to become a minister when she was taken from us and her family a year ago by cancer. Let us pray, honouring her memory and her legacy in the children of this area.*

L: Jesus, Face of God Incarnate,

P: **First word over all Creation, we are born of you and for you,**

L: Alpha, Peace from Truth,

P: **First hope among the dead, we are reborn of you and for you.**

L: Omega, Redemption and Reconciliation,

P: **First servant in our action of giving, we are in relationship of you and for you.**

L: Christ, Ruler of our todays and our tomorrows,

P: **First love in our hearts, minds and souls, we are in community of you and for you. Amen.**

Gathering Hymn **Saviour, Like a Shepherd Lead Us**, -Lyrics by DA Thrupp (1836); melody by WB Bradbury.

Saviour, like a	Refrain	We are Thine - do	Thou hast promised to	Early let us seek Thy
shepherd lead us,	Blessed Jesus,	Thou befriend us,	receive us,	favour,
much we need Thy	Blessed Jesus	be the Guardian of our	Poor and sinful though	Early let us do Thy will
tender care;	Thou hast bought us,	way;	we be;	Blessed Lord and only
in Thy pleasant	Thine we are;	keep Thy flock, from	Thou hast mercy to	Saviour,
pastures feed us,	Blessed Jesus,	sin defend us,	relieve us,	with Thy love our
for our use Thy folds	Blessed Jesus	seek us when we go	Grace to cleanse and	bosoms fill
prepare:	Thou hast bought us,	astray:	pow'r to free:	Refrain
	Thine we are;	Refrain	Refrain	

Call to Worship by former UCC Moderator The Very Rev. Richard Bott

L: Another year passes.

P: **Things end and things begin.**

L: Birth. Life. Death. Life beyond death. Everything changes. Everything except this:

P: **God's love is with me. God's love is with you. God's love is with all Creation.**

L: Today?

P: **Yesterday. Today. Forever.**

L: All Creation is held safe in that love.

P: **And all Creation is transformed in that love.**

L: Let us worship the God who loves us, yesterday, today, and forever.

P: **Amen.**

Ministry of Music **Look at the World**, by John Rutter

Children's Time *How many of you like sheep? Have you been near a flock of sheep or touched a sheep? Sheep definitely need a shepherd. They will wander everywhere if someone does not take care of them. So, Jesus said that we are like his sheep and he is our true shepherd. A shepherd does not just leave the sheep alone and go off to do whatever he*

wants. That is a really bad shepherd. Jesus is not like that. He promised that he would always be with us. That is why we call Jesus the Good Shepherd. He keeps us all together, and you can always talk with him about anything. Let us pray to Jesus, our Good Shepherd, together, because we know that he cares and he is paying attention to us, using the words that he taught us:

The Lord's Prayer-spoken

Hymn Christ is Made the Sure Foundation, VU # 325

Christ is made the sure foundation, Christ the head and cornerstone, Chosen of the Lord, and precious, Binding all the church in one; Holy Sion's help for ever, And its confidence alone.	To this temple where we call you, Come, O Lord of hosts, today; With your faithful loving kindness Hear your servants as they pray, And your fullest benediction Shed with in its walls always.	Here bestow on all your servants What they ask of you to gain, What they gain from you forever Ith the blessed to retain, And hereafter in your glory Evermore with you to reign.	Laud and honour to the Father, Laud and honour to the Son, Laud and honour to the Spirit, Ever three and ever one; One in might, and one in glory, While unending ages run.
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Offering Invitation & Prayer Friends, through the offerings you present, you are given the privilege of sharing in God's ministry. Let your hearts and spirits overflow with generosity as you give, for the ministries of this community of faith, of the whole United Church and beyond, through Mission and Service.

Gracious and loving God, you are indeed the beginning and end of all things. May these gifts be a part of your abundant vision for all creation. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Colossians 1:11-20 (NIV)

Being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, powers, rulers, or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Luke 1:68-79 (NIV) - The Song of Zechariah

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us - to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, guide our feet into the path of peace."

Hymn Draw the Circle Wide, MVU # 145

Refrain Draw the circle wide, Draw it wider still. Let this be our song, No one stands alone. Standing side by side.	God, the still-point of the circle 'round whom all creation turns; Nothing lost, but held forever, In God's gracious arms. Refrain	Let our hearts touch far horizons, So encompass great and small; Let our loving know no borders, Faithful to God's call. Refrain	Let the dreams we dream be larger, Than we've ever dreamed before; Let the dream of Christ be in us, Open every door. Refrain
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Special Music How Great Thou Art – Rev Larry

Message *The Cloud of Saints, Ever Present, Ever Inspiring, Our Goal in this Life*

I love clouds. In fact, I think that we are all fascinated by clouds, with their many types, colours, brightness and darkness, the shapes that we imagine that we see in them, perhaps mainly when we were children, but I am sure that we at least occasionally play this “that clouds looks just like... an elephant” pastime today. If you don’t perhaps you should – to remind you of the many awe-inspiring wonders of God’s world, as manifested through the many shades, forms and movements in Mother Nature, one of God’s most inspiring works of art!

We predict the future by looking at clouds, “Red sky at night, sailor’s delight, red sky in morning, sailors take warning!” When my mom would see sunbeams streaking down and outward from a cloud she would say that ‘the sun is drawing water.’ Have you ever heard anyone use the proverb above?

Shakespeare did. He said something similar in his play, *Venus and Adonis*. “Like a red morn that ever yet betokened, Wreck to the seaman, tempest to the field, Sorrow to the shepherds, woe unto the birds, Gusts and foul flaws to herdmen and to herds.”

In the Bible, (Matthew 16: 2-3,) Jesus said, “When in evening, ye say, it will be fair weather: For the sky is red. And in the morning, it will be foul weather today; for the sky is red and lowering.” Weather lore has been around since people needed to predict the weather and plan their activities. Sailors and farmers relied on it to navigate ships and plant crops.

Clouds are at times in short supply, and we lament the resulting drought, and at other times they ominously scud across the sky, dampening our moods, making us SAD, and the following rains can both nourish our crops, or increasingly flood our world and its peoples.

But the clouds of which I wish to speak today on our anniversary are always with us. They, like God, are ever-present, (omnipresent) and I’d like to think that they are also all-knowing (omniscient). This is the “cloud of saints” which we frequently refer to, and who are especially recognized and honoured on our anniversaries. The ‘cloud of saints’ refers to Hebrews 12:1 “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

Saints are people who have lived lives of deep faith, brave service to Jesus and the church, and who boldly have entered into the world outside of the church to spread God’s messages and to live out our commitments to God and to each other. Many saints have been canonized by the Roman Catholic and other churches, but while including many of these fine people, in my mind our saints include those who lived here, who worshipped here, who died and are buried here, often in the cemeteries associated with our predecessor churches.

How did they live their lives in order to be considered saintly? Think of those who you have known, who you know now, who you have read of and prayed for, those who are: kind, considerate, have a deep faith life, who think of themselves and their family members ahead of their own interests and needs.

Let us pause now to ponder the people who in our own experience meet these criteria. It is not a contest, but a privilege not earned, but granted freely through God’s good grace.

I think of the many members of the clergy who I have had the honour to know, to listen to and worship with, and who have mentored me; I think of the settlers of this land, having travelled mostly from Europe, clearing this land, and listening on Sundays to the circuit riding preachers, then building their own sanctuaries and holding services, gradually purchasing pianos and organs, providing care to those who were lonely or in need in their communities, gathering for social bazaars and picnics, staving away the isolation and horrid winters through building a community that was a lifeline, in so many ways. As the farms prospered, despite hard times, crop failures and a depression, with the loss of sons to two world wars, these committed Christians forged buildings, congregations, networks and music to worship and praise the Lord, becoming the cornerstones of these areas, growing villages and towns, spreading the Word of God, sending sons and daughters off to become clergy or missionaries, and always, always, caring for their neighbours. No system or population is perfect, they faced their challenges, their prejudices, and their poverty, to forge ahead, buttressed by their strong faith.

Today our churches face new, unfamiliar challenges, and perhaps our sense of hope has become a little tarnished, but the United Church of Canada, formed through the amalgamation of so many of those early churches, is actively planning for a future in which we, yes, will be smaller in number, but through which we must maintain hope, develop plans for our futures, and trust in God that “all will be well, and all matter of things will be well.” Julian of Norwich, a female saint from 1373.

Turning now to today’s scriptures: What struck me most in these passages of scripture is the amazing way in which Christ has, through his death, reconciled so much that is at odds in our world. There is division everywhere in our world and even in our own hearts and lives. When Jesus died, he did not leave us alone to live in the midst of chaos and division. In his death, he showed us another way and offered us a holy inheritance. In many ways, he turned upside down everything everyone thought was the way things should work. Jesus invited a thief hanging on a cross to be part of the new kingdom, even while they were dying together at the hands of the one in charge of the current earthly kingdom, Caesar. He lifted up those who were considered the most unworthy. In doing so, he showed that in God’s kingdom, everyone is on equal footing, a radical idea. Reconciliation—what does that mean for our lives and our world today? What do you need to reconcile within yourself? Who needs to be reconciled in your community? Who needs to be reconciled in the world? What might Jesus’ approach teach us about how to accomplish such reconciliation?

Our forebears also needed to continuously reconcile themselves to a challenging land and life, to the waves of immigrants from myriad places, all speaking incomprehensible languages such as German, Portuguese, French, Welsh, and yes, even those strong Gaelic, Scottish accents, so common to this township!

As we celebrate seven years in our current home and formation, as we remember the centuries of settlers whose legacy we are, we renew our vows to honour their memory and faith, to forge on as our reality too changes, and that we will continue to live lives filled with hope, and love, and always striving for peace, in our own minds, in our church and neighbourhoods, and in our souls. Amen.

Parting Hymn Lord, You Give the Great Commission, VU # 512

Lord, you give the great commission: "Heal the sick and preach the word." Lest the church neglect its mission, And the gospel go unheard, Help us witness to your purpose With renewed integrity; With the Spirit's gifts empow'r us For the work of ministry.	Lord, you call us to your service: "In my name baptize and teach." That the world may trust your promise, Life abundant meant for each, Give us all new fervour, draw us closer in community; With the Spirit's gifts empow'r us For the work of ministry.	Lord, you make the common holy: "This my body, this my blood." Let us all, for earth's true glory, Daily lift life heavenward, Asking that the world around us Share your children's liberty; With the Spirit's gifts empow'r us For the work of ministry.	Lord, you show us love's true measure: :Rather, what they do, forgive." Yet we hoard as private treasure All that you so freely give. May your care and mercy lead us In a just society; With the Spirit's gifts empow'r us For the work of ministry.	Lord, you bless with words assuring: "I am with you to the end." Faith and hope and love restoring, May we serve as you intend, And, amid the cares that claim us, Hold in mind eternity; With the Spirit's gifts empow'r us For the work of ministry.
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Commissioning & Benediction and Prayer for Times of Change

We are at a doorway that leads into a new way of being church. At this doorway, we are not alone: God has invited us to gather courage from the great cloud of witnesses before us, as we remember what was, those who have given of their time, talents, energy and love, to establish and maintain our churches, to feed both our hearts and our bellies, to inspire our minds and our actions, to be proud yet humble witnesses of Jesus' love and message in these communities. We remember those who have gone before us now, with deep gratitude and reverence.

Christ has challenged us to accept his radical call to discipleship, as we acknowledge what is difficult, challenging and daunting as the world changes and becomes more withdrawn and isolated, as our numbers shrink and our congregations age, and as the challenges of those in need in our world, and the natural world itself, as our provider of clean air, water and nutrition, come under threat.

The Spirit has led us to be Christ's Church, and we strive to plan, prepare, and await the changes which are a natural part of life on earth, but always guided and uplifted by God's grace, as we imagine what will be.

At this doorway: We take courage in the assurance that God is with us; we affirm our call to go where Christ leads; and we trust the Spirit to guide us through the challenging space between what was, what is, and what will be.

Surely, we are not alone. Thanks be to God.

Sending Forth As we greet each new doorway, let us give all thanks and glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the church, and through the Spirit, now and forever, Amen.

Choral Benediction God Be With You 'Til We Meet Again, VU # 422

God be with you 'til we meet again;
Loving counsels guide, uphold you,
With a shepherd's care enfold you: God be with you 'til we
meet again.

God be with you 'til we meet again;
Unseen wings protecting hide you,
Daily manna still provide you;
God be with you 'til we meet again.

Choral Amen