

Lighting of the Christ Candle, Welcome, & Acknowledgement of the Land

-by Sue Carleton, Shallow Lake UC, Shallow Lake, ON

Creator God, you have blessed us with a land of abundance to live in, a land that provides for us, a land that offers us places of silence and tranquility, a land that is home. Dear Lord, we honour the First Peoples who have lived and continue to live and care for this land for thousands of years. Help us truly appreciate what we have received in this land as we offer our thanks to you for this abundance. Help us appreciate the diversity of this country and the blessing of all the people who reside here. Thank you for allowing everyone the freedom to worship as we individually choose. Thank you for our places of worship and for the people who worship and give thanks with us. Receive our prayer as we lift our voices to you in praise.

The Christ Candle is lit

The Christ Candle is lit. Jesus is in our midst. We welcome him. We journey with him today. Amen.

Announcements

Call to Worship *-by Gord Dunbar, Kincardine PC, Kincardine, ON*

L: Look at all of us! Aren't we a magnificent menagerie muddled together? Look at all our different shapes, our different faces, our different selves.

P: We come in all our diversity and with all our strengths, invited by the Three-In-One to become one though many.

L: Is that even possible – to become greater than the sum of our parts?

P: We come because we trust stories of good news shared, a continuing saga of becoming the kin-dom of God, that shouts, "Yes!"

L: Let us all come to worship.

Ministry of Music *You Can Be the Voice of Justice*

Gathering Prayer *-by Susan Ivany, Westminster UC, Thunder Bay, ON & Catherine Tovell, Kilworth UC, London, ON.*

God of Grace and Healing, you are witness to every part of our being. You know the places where we shine brightly with confidence, just as you know the hidden, aching parts of ourselves that we try not to reveal. Give us the senses to notice injustice, the spirits to risk in the name of those being oppressed, and the hearts to embrace all who are wounded and traumatized. We seek the power of your grace to heal all that is broken within us. Mend our broken hearts, heal the wounds of our spirits, and send us out to continue this Lenten path together, ready to share your way of peace and healing wherever we go and whoever we meet. Amen.

Gathering Hymn *When Hands Reach Out*, MVU # 136 (tune: VU # 372)

When hands reach out and fingers trace	When fingers spell and signs express	When broken bodies will not mend,	And when the ways we learn and grow	Your Spirit gives us diff'ring ways
The beauty of a loved one's face,	Our prayer and praise and thankfulness,	We than you, God for Christ our Friend.	Are not the ways that others know,	To serve you well and offer praise.
We thank you, God, that love relies	We thank you, God, that hands can sing;	In him, our healing can begin:	We thank you, God, that we have learned	When all are joined as one, we'll be
On gifts of grace not seen with eyes.	You bless the silent songs we bring.	he welcomes all the wounded in.	Your love's a gift and never earned.	Your able, strong community.

Prayer of Confession God, we are a broken people, living in a broken world. It is not fashionable to admit this. Usually we regard ourselves as pretty good folks, only in need of a little tweaking here and there. But the problem goes deeper than that. Today, we cannot escape the recognition that racism is not about the actions and attitudes of a few people. It is deeply engrained in our culture, and very few of us are beyond its reach. We need your challenge to be honest. We need your forgiveness to cleanse our souls. We need your call to change and action. We need your guidance to free everyone from the bondage of racism. We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ.

Words of Assurance The tradition of the church is that God longs for a world of justice, equality, and freedom. Surely, the arc of history is bent toward this reality as we join with God in the repair of this world. Let us not be discouraged. Thanks be to God.

Offertory Prayer *-by Kate Crawford, First-St. Andrew's UC, London, ON*

Receive our gifts as you have received our hosannas and praise. Bless both what is given and those who give it. Bless most deeply of all those whose lives will be touched by what we offer here. Amen.

Hymn Walls that Divide, Songs for a Gospel People # 32

Tho' ancient walls may still stand proud And racial strife be fact, Tho' bound'ries may be lines of hate, Proclaim God's saving act!	Refrain Walls that divide are broken down; Christ is our unity! Chains that enslave are thrown aside; Christ is our liberty!	When vested pow'r stands firm entrenched And breaks another's back, When waste and want live side by side, It's gospel that we lack! Refrain	The truth we seek in varied scheme, The life that we pursue, Unites us in a common quest For self and world made new! Refrain	The church divided seeks that grace, That newness we proclaim; A unity of serving love That lives praise to God's name! Refrain
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Children's Ministry "Not My Problem" Story *Adapted from a Thai folk tale.*

Once upon a time, a queen sat on her balcony eating pancakes and syrup with her chief advisor. As they ate, they gazed down at the busy street below. The Queen pointed to something in the distance, and as she did a drop of syrup from her pancake landed on the balcony railing.

"My Queen, you have spilled a drop of syrup. Shall I call a servant to come and clean it up?"

But the Queen laughed, "A little drop of syrup is **NOT MY PROBLEM**. Someone will clean it later."

They went on eating and talking as the drop of syrup warmed in the sun and began to slowly drip down the side of railing until it landed in the street below with a plop!

"Your Highness, that drop of syrup has now fallen into the street, where it is attracting flies. Shouldn't we call a servant to come and clean it up?"

But again, the Queen yawned lazily and replied, "A little drop of syrup and a few flies are **NOT MY PROBLEM**. Someone will deal with it later."

Soon a lizard darted out from underneath the palace wall and began to catch the flies on her tongue. Then a cat sprang from the baker's shop and began to bat the lizard back and forth like a toy. Just then a dog charged out from the butcher's shop and began to bite the cat on the neck.

"Your Highness, now the flies have attracted a lizard, which attracted a cat, which is now being attacked by a dog. Shouldn't we call someone to stop the fight?"

But the Queen only stretched, and shook her head at her advisor, "Won't you relax. A silly animal fight is **NOT MY PROBLEM**. Someone will surely see to it."

In fact, the baker did see to it. She saw the dog attacking her cat and ran out with her rolling pin and began to hit the dog. And then the butcher heard his dog howling and ran out with his broom and began to hit the cat. Soon the butcher and baker were hitting each other. Then the neighbouring shopkeepers began to take sides, joining in the fight. Then some soldiers came along, but some knew the butcher and some knew the baker. So, the soldiers, too, took sides and the battle grew. It grew and grew until a great battle waged in the streets. People were throwing rocks through windows and tipping over the vendor carts. Someone picked up a torch from the wall and hurled it through a window. Fire raged, and eventually it spread to the palace.

The next thing they knew, the Queen and her advisor were being escorted down a ladder from the balcony into the street below because the palace itself was in flames. Later that day when the fire had died out, the Queen and her advisor surveyed the ruins of their land. Suddenly the Queen stopped in the street underneath where her balcony had been. She reached down and touched something in a small puddle on the ground. "It's syrup! I guess I should have made it my problem and cleaned up that drop of syrup in the first place. Now, my whole kingdom has been lost because of it.

That was the last day that the Queen ever said: **IT'S NOT MY PROBLEM!**

Prayer Dear God: We love you. Help us make a difference in this world by not saying, "It's Not My Problem". When we see someone who is hurting, please give us the strength to make them feel better. Please help us do something about situations that are wrong. With your help, I promise that I will treat others the way I would like to be treated. God, bless our families and friends and keep them safe. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer spoken
Children leave for Sunday School

Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 37:1-14 - The Valley of Dry Bones (NRSV)

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you and will cause flesh to come upon you and cover you with skin and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord."

So, I prophesied as I had been commanded, and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them, but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' Therefore, prophecy and say to them: Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves

and bring you up from your graves, O my people, and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.”

Psalm 130 NRSV A Song of Ascents (NRSV)

Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord. Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word, I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning. Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

Romans 8:6-11 (NRSV)

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason, the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law—indeed, it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Hymn For the Healing of the Nations, VU # 678

For the healing of the nations, God, we pray with one accord; For a just and equal sharing Of the things that earth affords. To a life of love in action Help us rise and pledge our word.	Lead us forward into freedom; From despair your world release; That, redeemed from war and hatred, All may come and go in peace. Show us how through care and goodness Fear will die and hope increase.	All that kills abundant living, Let it from the earth be banned: Pride of status, race or schooling, Dogmas that obscure your plan. In our common quest for justice May we hallow life’s brief span.	You, Creator-God, have written Your great name on humankind; For our growing in your likeness Bring the life of Christ to mind; That, by our response and service, Earth its destiny may find.
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Introduction to Rev. Therese Samuel

This morning, we are blessed to have Rev. Therese Samuel, Minister of Right Relations & Social Justice, Antler River Watershed Regional Council. She will be speaking to us on “seeing your brother or sister in the face of a stranger.”

Message Rev. Therese Samuel

Rev. Therese Samuel was born and raised in Canada -only one who was “different” in her neighbourhood -learned from an early age that there were people who would treat her differently because of her skin colour -same at seminary, only one of colour - developed a group of friends who supported, made her who she is today -racism is alive in our society -whether intentional or overt -sometimes hard to notice -what can we do to eliminate racism? -if you see something, say something but don’t be artificial with intentions -eliminating racism is too big for humans but not too big for God -all we want is life and peace

Prayers of the People -from VU # 525 & Robin Wardlaw, used with permission

Help us to recognize Jesus, we pray, in all the ways he comes to us: face bruised from torment and pain, hands roughened from planting and picking crops, back sore from days bent over at work, feet and throat sore from marching for justice, soul sore from the indignities visited upon him because of race or sex, age or class, or orientation. May the love of Christ find its way over, under, and through walls built high on borders and between those who used to get along, past security posted outside the boardrooms of the powerful and next to wounded hearts, through doors shut tight against new arrivals or new ideas.

Come, O Love, to tent encampments and gravesides, to people needing to boil water and those fleeing unsafe homes or countries. Soften us, and our hearts, we pray, that we may remember the covenant in which we all live and move and have our being. Let us meet today. Let us meet Jesus. Let us truly meet one another. Let us meet our neighbours, the ones just beyond our walls, and those beyond the horizon, the ones who need us, the ones we need, and the ones who irritate us. Let us meet the Christ within us all. May we all, people and leaders, younger and older, of different races and creeds, different abilities, languages, and traditions, LGBTQ+, TS, CIS, or however we know and name ourselves, let the Spirit tend to our hearts, to be ready for Christ, for covenant, for love.

We remember with loving concern those who are near and dear to us: our friends, families, and neighbours. We ask you to listen to the prayers so deeply buried in our hearts that you alone, O God, know them. We name those now, in the quiet of our hearts. (*Time for silent prayer*) And, all these prayers, the ones spoken aloud or whispered softly, the ones signed or written or painted, we offer them in the sure confidence that you, Holy One, like a caring mother, will listen as we pray. Amen

Parting Hymn *The Song of Love*, (tune VU # 625)

The Song of Love continues on
Beyond a dream and death.
It's melody sings on the wind
And through creation's breath.
It's ancient and yet ever new
And sung in harmony
Inviting all created things
To peace and liberty.

The Song of Love, it still sings
on
beyond hatred and war.
It mends the wounded soul
from pain.
Serenity restored!
In silence, many languages,
in varied ways expressed,
it's heard in anthems of the
heart
as kindness is professed.

The Song of Love, it can be
heard
in laughter and in cries
of children and of elders too
and in a dying sigh.
It's universal in its theme
beyond restrictive creeds.
It is sung out in how we live
and rooted in our deeds.

The Song of Love, it has been
taught
by teacher, prophet, sage.
Its message is a common one
that's part of ev'ry age.
It's sung by those of varied
faiths,
it's lived by those who care.
Inspiring us to venture on,
the Song of Love is shared.

Benediction *-adapted from Celebrate God's Presence*

Go out into the world in peace. Have courage to question what seems wrong. Hold onto what is good and return no one evil for evil. Strengthen the fainthearted. Support the weak and help the suffering. Help the marginalized and oppressed. Honour all people. Love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Choral Amen

Extinguish the Christ Candle