

Bulletin for Sunday, June 6/21 – We Celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion

Pianist/accompanist: Michael Oddy
Gift of Music: Joanna Novosedlik
Singing Bowl: Wilma Stewart
Reader: Bev Marshall
Minister: Rev. Del Stewart

Westminster's Mission Statement

Westminster United Church is an inclusive church for Progressive Christians...
creating something beautiful for God.

GATHERING

Musical Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Acknowledgement of Territory

Westminster United Church sits on the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, which includes the Ojibwa, the Odawa, and the Potawatomie. We respect the longstanding relationships with First Nations people in this place in the 100-mile Windsor-Essex Peninsula and the straits – *les detroits* – of Detroit.

We Enter Worship and Celebration (Leslie Penrose, United Church of Christ, <https://www.ucc.org>, adapted)

Reader One: Del Stewart; Reader 2: Wilma Stewart

One: At God's table of justice, everyone has a place and none are turned away.

Two: Here strangers are welcomed as friends, the poor sit alongside the rich, and the upside-down-kin-dom of God is revealed.

One: At God's table of abundance, a banquet of righteousness and liberation is set for all.

Two: Here the powerless are heard, the outcasts are showered with honour, and the inside-out kin-dom of God is revealed.

One: At God's table of life, all peoples know peace and creation flourishes.

Two: Here the hopeless are nourished with possibility, the complacent are transformed into advocates for change.

One: Here in our very midst the kin-dom of God is revealed...

The singing bowl is sounded three times

Opening Prayer (Leslie Penrose, United Church of Christ, <https://www.ucc.org>, adapted)

Reader One: Del Stewart; Reader 2: Wilma Stewart

One: We come, God of the Journey, a people from different places, different histories, different lifestyles.

Two: We come hoping to find companionship for the journey, solidarity for the struggle.

One: We gather, God of Hospitality, around your “welcome table”. a table not yet round, but rounding.

Two: We gather seeking to become a “round-table people”, welcoming all, with no preferred seating, no firsts and lasts...and no corners for “the least of these”.

One: We yearn, God of the Rainbow, for a new way of living and relating...as neighbours not strangers, as brothers and sisters...not ‘them and us’.

Two: We yearn to live fully celebrating both the diversity of our human family, and the unity of our call to compassion and justice.

One: We hunger, God of Abundant Life, for lives that have meaning and integrity, and for relationships grounded in mutuality and respect.

Two: We thirst for places to bring our doubts, our fears - places to express honestly who we are. We thirst for hope and encouragement as we struggle to follow Jesus in the way of risking-love.

One: With the gift of Your grace we are nourished.

Two: With the promise of Your Presence may we be strengthened to be faithful....

Quiet Reflection

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.

Opening Hymn: VU 700, God of Freedom, God of Justice (Joanna Novosedlik)

Reflections on Jesus' Meal Practices and the Sacrament of Communion

"The Jesus Banquet" by Rev. Rex A. E. Hunt, <https://www.rexaehuntprogressive.com>,
selected paragraphs, *adapted*)

There is a general agreement in modern biblical scholarship that meals played an important role in the Jesus tradition. Indeed, Jesus seems so closely associated with meals that some of his critics labelled him "a glutton and drunkard"...(After his death) Jesus' followers regularly ate together, even before they began to conduct worship services. They wanted to celebrate the meals of Jesus. The complete meal tradition they followed – primarily the Greco-Roman banquet – was one they inherited and which brought "a wide variety of both Christian and non-Christian concerns to expression."

"Subversive Meals" (p. 286, by R. Alan Street, *adapted*)

The Lord's Supper (or Jesus Banquet) was an anti-imperial practice. The irony is that Christians used the same banquet – employed by Rome as a vehicle of advancing its social vision – to oppose Caesar and his agenda of world domination.

The Lord's Supper (or Jesus Banquet) celebrated the inauguration of God's kingdom...and served as a venue where Christians could invite their curious friends to dine and experience for themselves the first fruits of the kingdom...

Because the structure was like other Roman meals, the visitor would not enter totally unfamiliar territory. The inclusive, egalitarian atmosphere was likely very attractive to a guest living on the margins. The symposium activities had a subversive political quality, since the community raised its voice in praise of Jesus (not Caesar) as Lord and proclaimed a vision that differed entirely from Rome's.

Hymn: VU 679, Let There Be Light (Joanna Novosedlik)

LISTENING

READINGS FROM OUR FAITH TRADITIONS (Bev Marshall)

First Contemporary Reading

“**Mystery**” – a meditation by Gordon B. McKeeman (<https://www.uua.org>)

How does one address a mystery?

Cautiously – let us go cautiously, then,
to the end of our certainty,
to the boundary of all we know,
to the rim of uncertainty,
to the perimeter of the unknown that surrounds us.

Reverently – let us go with a sense of awe,
a feeling of approaching the powerful holy
whose lightening slashes the sky,
whose persistence splits concrete with green sprouts,
whose miracles are present in every place and moment.

Hopefully – out of our need for wholeness in our own lives,
the reconciliation of mind and heart,
the conjunction of reason and passion,
the intersection of the timeless with time.

Quietly – for no words will explain the inarticulate
or summon The Presence that is always present even in our absence.

But what shall I say?

Anything – any anger, any hope, any fear, any joy,
any request, any word, that comes from
the depth of being addressed to Being itself –

or, perhaps, nothing, no complaint, no request,
no entreaty, no thanksgiving, no praise, no blame,
no pretense of knowing or of not knowing.

Simply be in the intimate Presence of Mystery,
unashamed – unadorned – unafraid.

From the Hebrew Scriptures

Psalms 138 (NRSV) – Thanksgiving and Praise by Israel’s King David

I give thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart:

before the gods I sing your praise:
I bow down toward your holy temple
and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness;
for you have exalted your name and your word above everything.
On the day I called, you answered me,
you increased my strength of soul.

All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord,
for they have heard the words of your mouth.
They shall sing of the ways of the Lord,
for great is the glory of the Lord.
For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly;
but the haughty he perceives far away.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;
you stretch out your hand,
and your right hand delivers me.
The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands.

From the New Testament

Mark 3:20-21; 31-35 (SV)

[After Jesus had appointed the Twelve] he goes home, and once again a crowd gathers, so that they could not even grab a bite to eat. When his relatives heard about it, they came to get him. (You see, they thought he was out of his mind.)...

Then his mother and brothers [and sisters] arrive. While still outside, they send in and ask for him.

A crowd was sitting around him, and they say to him, "Look, your mother and brothers [and sisters] are outside looking for you."

In response he says to them, "My mother and brothers [and sisters] – whoever are they?"

And looking right at those seated around him in a circle, he says, "Here are my mother and my brothers [and my sisters].

Whoever does God's will, that's my brother and sister and mother!"

Second Contemporary Reading

"A Gentle Presence" – a poem by Chuck Lathrop (in More Than Words, pp. 142-143)

For the church to call itself to work as Jesus did,
in poverty and under oppression,
is to seek an unaccustomed stance.

It is to be, stand, and operate from the point of view
of the world's victims and losers.
It is to live and preach the gospel from the bottom up.
It is a falling down, a downward mobility, if you will,
into the commonality of human existence.

It is neither nice nor comfortable.
In addition, it is confrontational and conflictual.

Because of such a stance, the church, while it is committed
to and in the world, will also be at odds with the world 'as it is'.

Such obedience to God will necessarily mean it will be
a minority phenomenon, a threat to
any political or cultural status quo.

The ramifications are many, the cost is high.

Choral Response: VU 701, What Does the Lord Require of You (Joanna Novosedlik)

Centering Silence

Let us now surrender ourselves
to rest a moment,
to enter a time of silent and peaceful reflection...

Silent Reflection

Sermon: At Odds With the World (Rev. Del Stewart)

OUR RESPONSIVE CELEBRATIONS

Offering – PLEASE NOTE: Even though our building is now closed because of the Covid-19 lockdown, Westminster's mission and ministry carry on. You are invited to continue making your offerings via e-transfer, CanadaHelps, dropping your offerings' envelope through the mail slot of the church doors, or signing up for PAR. For further offerings' information please get in touch with Westminster's Church Treasurer, Fred Barkhouse, at scubafred2000@netscape.net or Council Chairperson, Jeanne Stocks, at bjstocks@mnsi.net. You may also email the church Office at westmin@mnsi.net or call there at 519-258-1471 and leave a message.

Offertory Meditation (Mustard Seed, <https://pilgrimwr.unitingchurch.org.au> ,*adapted*) –
Min

We make our offerings, small and large,
with the hope and confidence
that all we do,
all we offer,
all we say,
all we think
and all we hope
will take root in this world
and be the source of new expressions
of God's love,
of God's justice,
of God's character,
of God's mission,
and of God's reign.
May God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven
through us,
alongside us,
despite us,
and for us. Amen.

Offertory Hymn: VU 541, Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow (*Joanna Novosedlik*)

WE PRAY

Mourning the 215 children found in a mass grave at Kamloops Residential School

“A Memorial Prayer for Children of This Land” (offered by Indigenous Ministries,
United Church of Canada, <https://united-church.ca>, *adapted*)

Great and heavenly Spirit,
God of compassion, healing and comfort,

We lift up in prayer the sacred lives of the children, some now known to us, all known to you, who died in residential schools.
We lift up in prayer the sacred lives of the children who went missing from these schools and whose fates are unknown to those who held them most dear.
We grieve the loss of so many thousands of these little ones, and we grieve especially their loss so far away from home.
We grieve the loss of youth with so much potential. These were children of this place, children of our land. Their loss, their giftedness is our collective loss.
We lament how long their families have had to live with unanswered questions.

Hear our prayers:

for those who were not informed of their children's deaths at all, or on a timely basis;
for those who were not told where their daughters and sons had been buried;
for those who long hoped that a child who went missing somehow survived and had a good life –
even as they may have also feared the worst.

We lament our complicity in the loss of these children.

As members of a church which ran residential schools,
we seek your help as we look to redress the many ways in which our church failed
these Indigenous children, their families, and their communities.

We pray that your reconciling love will teach us how
to create bonds of community and understanding as Indigenous and non-Indigenous
peoples today.

We lift up with gratitude the efforts of all those
who are seeking to honour the lives of the children who died,
as well as the children whose fates are unknown,
through ongoing research and acts of remembrance.

We ask for your continued guidance of them as they work to uncover the stories of the
lost.

We understand how precious this information is, and how vital it is to the healing of so
many families and communities.

Bless those who are preparing to honour the children with sacred ceremonies
and those who work to protect burial sites, in keeping with the traditions of Indigenous
peoples across this land.

We pray for the families of these children and for all who loved them.
Envelop them in the warmth of your infinite care and give them peace.
Inspire all of us with energy, wisdom and commitment to the loving pursuit of the truth
which will heal us all in our brokenness
and lead to reconciliation with our neighbours across this land...

Silent prayer and meditation

Amen.

WE CELEBRATE THE SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION AS 'THE JESUS BANQUET'
[1] – Min

*(Please note: the word "wine" in this liturgy is strictly symbolic. In Westminster's
communion service Welch's grape juice is a substitute for the communion element
referred to as "wine")*

Welcome

Welcome to this banqueting table.
Enjoy the hospitality.
Here, we are reminded that all human beings are equal
and all life forms are to be respected.

Thanksgiving

We give thanks for the gifts of the Earth, for its love, and its creativity.
We do so because the Sacred Earth and all that is in it give witness to the Spirit of Life.

We give thanks for the life and public ministry of Jesus of Nazareth,
prophet, poet and sage;
For the memory of his subversive proclamation of the commonwealth of God,
and his radical, loving kindness.
He taught that compassion is the heart of God,
and he practiced equality in the simple act of table fellowship.

Sharing Jesus' Table Fellowship Story

When Jesus blessed the bread, he used his traditional Jewish prayers, saying:
"Blessed is the Holy One of Israel, sovereign of all that is,
who brings forth the grain from the ground."

And when he blessed the cup, he again used his traditional Jewish prayers, saying:
"Blessed is the Holy One of Israel, Sovereign of all that is,
who brings forth the grape from the vine."

And here today...

We share in this act of friendship with millions of people all around the world
and with faithful people of the past.

With them and in celebration of our Westminster faith-community we say:
"Gifts to share and sustaining memory bring people of hope together.
The banquet's joy and celebration mark the presence of light."

Banqueting Hymn: VU 457, As We Gather at Your Table (Joanna Novosedlik)

Symbolic Gathering at the Banquet Table

To gather around this table
to break bread freely
and to share the cup openly,
is to bring justice to life.

True acts of sharing help us to be like the human Jesus who taught:
“Be compassionate as God is compassionate.”

And who said:
“Give and there will be gifts given to you.”

The bread and cup

The bread is broken – Min: Bread for our journey. Take and eat.

The bread is eaten

The wine is poured out – Min: Wine for our life. Take and drink.

The people drink the wine

Post-Jesus Banquet Reflections

As a community of faith we have shared the bread and the cup,
and in doing so we have acknowledged our common humanity.
May our commitment to peace bear witness to the heart of this faith-community,
and may we be a people who unite our words with our deeds. Amen.

DEPARTING

Closing Hymn: VU 691, Though Ancient Walls (Joanna Novosedlik)

Parting Words (<http://third-space.org.uk>, adapted)

As we prepare to leave this time of worship and celebration,
let us remember that God is the restless Wind of Love
sweeping through this world,
blowing where it will blow,
stirring hearts to change,
making all things possible.
And let us commit ourselves to a restless desire for change –
even change that seems impossible.

Quiet reflection

In the week that lies ahead,
may the transforming power of goodness and love
sweep through our lives and our world
so that all may share in a harvest of blessings...

The singing bowl is sounded three times

Words of Blessing (<https://united-church.ca>, *adapted*)

Go now in peace.

As you have been loved – love.

As you have been welcomed – welcome.

As you have been fed – feed.

As you have been received – give.

And may the boundless Presence of Love be with you now and always. Amen.

Choral Sending Forth: MV 115, Behold, Behold, I Make All Things New (Joanna Novosedlik)

Musical Postlude (Michael Oddy and Joanna Novosedlik)

[1] Based on the “Jesus Banquet” developed by the Rev. Dr, David Galston and the Quest Community, Hamilton, ON, Canada