

ZOOM Worship with Communion for May2, 2021  
Affirming Anniversary with special guest  
Rev. Michael Blair, General Secretary, General Council  
The United Church of Canada

Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

Centering Music: "Gather Us In" MV 7

Gather us in, ground us in you.  
Gather us in, ground us in you.  
Gather us in, gather us in,  
ground us, ground us in you.

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

One: We gather virtually in the welcome of God:

*Two: all ages, all stages, all colours, all cultures.*

One: We are drawn together celebrating God's rich diversity:

*Two: all abilities, all expressions of faith, all creation.*

One: We celebrate God's acceptance and love for each:

*Two: all genders, all orientations, all children of God.*

One: We are the beloved of our Creator God -

*Two: We worship with gratitude and praise!*

One: Holy God, we are grateful for the gift of our lives and the gift of others in our lives.

*Two: You created each of us with dignity and worth.*

One: You call us to love each other and to do nothing to others  
that we would find hateful to ourselves.

*Two: In your name, we honor and respect the many ways that people live and love.*

One: Loving God, we repent for the times when our faith traditions have  
named lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people unworthy.

*Two: God's love does not exclude. We are all worthy.*

One: Forgiving God, we repent for the times when our faith communities have made it difficult for  
those who have differing abilities, mental illnesses, or socio-economic challenges to find a  
spiritual home with us.

*Two: God's love does not exclude. We are all welcome.*

One: We suffer when anyone is oppressed, excluded or feels shamed by religious people who overlook the fundamental call to justice in our scriptures.

*Two: God, your true justice flourishes when we can live with authenticity and integrity.*

One: Help us work to build your community, God, where people are celebrated as full and equal members, regardless of age, race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, ethnic origin or economic circumstance. May we recognize their many gifts.

*Two: We celebrate diversity as God's holy blessing that enriches us all. Amen*

Opening Hymn: 'Praise the Source of All Creation'

Praise the Source of all creation, giving life throughout the Earth,  
blessing every love relation, filling all with sacred worth.

Celebrate all forms and colors, varied beauty everywhere,  
streams of goodness overflowing, wondrous gifts for all to share.

Many genders, many races, all reflect Divinity;  
many gifts and many graces help us be all we can be.  
Partners on this path of freedom, taking down each stifling wall,  
we will open doors of welcome, bringing hope and joy to all.

Long have many been excluded, judged and scorned by custom's norms;  
everyone will be included as we work to bring reforms.  
Let us end abuse and violence, bringing justice everywhere,  
joining Holy Wisdom's mission, helping all be free and fair.

Equal marriage, healing, freeing, nurtures body, mind and soul,  
reaffirming every being, all created good and whole.  
Come, rejoice and sing together, celebrating life and love;  
praise the great Creative Spirit, living in us and above.

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Scripture Readings:

Acts 8:26-40

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Get up and go towards the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' (This is a wilderness road.) So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over to this chariot and join it.' So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' He replied, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

'Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,

and like a lamb silent before its shearer,  
so he does not open his mouth.

In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth.'

The eunuch asked Philip, 'About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?' Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?' He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

1 John 4:7-21

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, 'I love God', and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

Reflection:     *The Beloved Community*     Rev. Michael Blair

Hymn: "There is a Time" MV 165

There is a time that we must rise.

There is a time that we must stand.

There is a time that we must come together.

For blessed are our lives.  
blessed our love,  
and blessed the promise gathered now.

There is a time that we must leave,  
go from the place where hatreds breed  
and, turning, feel the Spirit breathe us together.

For blessed are our lives.  
blessed our love,  
and blessed the promise gathered now.

There is a time we know the way,  
there is a time we watch and pray,  
in living faith we make our way together.

For blessed are our lives.  
blessed our love,  
and blessed the promise gathered now.

Upon the dry a cloud will rise,  
and truth will shine among the lies  
and wisdom sing as we arise together.

For blessed are our lives.  
blessed our love,  
and blessed the promise gathered now.

There is a bow within the rain,  
and it will come and bend again  
and colours shine where we have been together.

For blessed are our lives.  
blessed our love,  
and blessed the promise gathered now.

Virtual Offering:

One: Holy Source of love, bless all that we offer to you:

Two: *Hearts, minds and hopes,  
Talents, skills and vision,  
Money, time and a wide welcome –  
even as we share virtually and at a safe distance.*

One: May what we share change the world in your name.  
Amen

Sung Response: "Who is my Mother?" MV 178

Who is my mother, who is my brother?  
All those who gather round Jesus Christ:  
Spirit blown people born from the Gospel  
sit at the table, round Jesus Christ.

Differently abled, differently labeled,  
widen the circle round Jesus Christ:  
crutches and stigmas, culture's enigmas,  
all come together round Jesus Christ.

Love will relate us colour or status  
can't segregate us, round Jesus Christ:  
family failings, human derailings  
all are accepted round Jesus Christ.

Bound by one vision, met for one mission  
we claim each other, round Jesus Christ:  
here is my mother, here is my brother,  
kindred in spirit, through Jesus Christ.

Sacrament of Communion:

Invitation to Communion

Choir: "Come Be Fed"

One: God is with us.

*All: In each of our spaces and places;*

One: at this time of sacred refreshment and renewal.

*All: Called in grace and gifted in love.*

One: Holy One, we gather virtually this day as one people, members of the same body, grateful for your many gifts, and carrying the hope within us for a world filled with love. This hope was given by you from the very beginning of your creation.

Two: You made the earth, and all that lives on it.

You inspired prophets and widows and slaves to seek liberation from all that oppresses, so that we might be released to love fully. You became incarnate in Jesus Christ, so that through him we might experience the depth and width of your unquenchable love.

And so, joining our voices with the ancestors who have gone before us, we praise your name in song:

**All: (sung) MV 203**

**O holy, holy, holy God, O God of time and space,  
All earth and sea and sky above  
bear witness to your grace.  
Hosanna in the highest heav'n, creation sings your praise.  
And blessed is the one who comes  
and bears your name always.**

One: While Jesus lived among us he stood up for women and children, he touched the untouchable, healed the sick, and welcomed those who had given up hope of being included. Through him we see a path not only to our own freedom, but a path to the liberation of the whole world.

Two: He taught us that it will not be in the brutality of violence that our world will be saved. Rather, it will be in showing kindness to our neighbour, in standing up against injustice, in returning hate with love, in transforming one heart at a time. It will be in the simple but holy task of dining together, sharing bread and wine, truly seeing one another as beloved by you.

One: Send your Holy Spirit, we pray, into these gifts of bread and wine in each home our location where we remain today. Please send your Spirit into us, that we may recognize each other as members of the same body, Christ's hands and feet and heart, sent for the healing of the world. Amen.

Prayers for Others

At this time, we also remember all those  
with whom you would have us share your feast.  
We pray for all who are in sorrow or in pain . . .  
all who are ill or alone . . .  
all who live with fear, oppression, or hunger . . .  
all whom the world counts as last and least . . . .  
We pray for your church and its varied ministries . . .  
for the nations as they strive for peace and justice . . .  
for the earth, and the fragile web of life we share . . .  
for our families and friends . . . .

Prayer of Jesus (*paraphrase*) VU 916

All: *Eternal Spirit,  
Earth-maker, Pain bearer, Life-giver,  
Source of all that is and that shall be,  
Father and Mother of us all,  
Loving God, in whom is heaven:  
The hallowing of your name echo*

*through the universe!*  
*The way of your justice be followed*  
*by the peoples of the world!*  
*Your heavenly will be done*  
*by all created beings!*  
*Your commonwealth of peace and freedom*  
*sustain our hope and come on earth.*

*With the bread we need for today, feed us.*  
*In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.*  
*In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.*  
*From trial too great to endure, spare us.*  
*From the grip of all that is evil, free us.*

*For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,*  
*now and forever. Amen.*

#### Remembering Jesus as we Break the Bread and Fill the Cup

One: Called in grace and gifted in love, Jesus gathered with his friends and shared a meal; the setting simple, the meaning profound. Bread of life, cup of blessing.

"This is my body. This is my blood.  
Do this in remembrance of me."

Two: This table is God's offer of grace and an invitation to community where forgiveness is found and we are called to be the body of Christ.

One: In that body, we find all shapes, sizes, and abilities,  
the young and the old, all colors and shades,  
and the created diversity of loving relationships.  
Together, we are affirmed in our shared mission,  
and empowered for discipleship.  
No one goes hungry.  
This table welcomes everyone!  
Come, share the feast!

#### Prayer after communion

All: *We give thanks to you, God,*  
*for this meal.*  
*Simple.*  
*Elegant.*  
*Refreshing.*  
*Re-creating.*

*May we hear the call:  
Love one another  
as you have loved us.  
One body, many members,  
the body of Christ.  
Amen*

*Our communion prayers were adapted from prayers written by Rev LeeAnne Watkins and Rev Scott A. Ressman, used with gratitude and permission.*

Closing Music: “Draw the Circle Wide” MV 145

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.  
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,  
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

God the still-point of the circle,  
round whom all creation turns;  
nothing lost, but held forever,  
in God’s gracious arms.

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.  
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,  
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

Let our hearts touch far horizons,  
so encompass great and small;  
let our loving know no borders,  
faithful to God’s call.

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.  
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,  
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

Let the dreams we dream be larger,  
than we’ve ever dreamed before;  
let the dream of Christ be in us,  
open every door.

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.  
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,  
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

Blessing: Rev. Michael Blair