

ZOOM Worship for May 9, 2021  
Christian Family Sunday and Blessing of Sabbatical Time

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:        “And on This Path” MV 8

And on this path, the gates of holiness are open wide,  
and on this path, the gates of holiness are open wide,  
and on this path, the gates of holiness are open wide!  
Open wide! Open wide! Open wide!  
The gates are open wide!

So enter in, the gates of holiness are open wide,  
so enter in, the gates of holiness are open wide,  
so enter in, the gates of holiness are open wide,  
Open wide! Open wide! Open wide!  
The gates are open wide!

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer:

One: Today we gather at our screens, on our phones, or in our imaginations.

Two: *No matter how we connect, we are part of God's living family.*

One: God calls us into loving, respectful, supportive relationships,

Two: *God calls us to discipleship with and for one another and all creation.*

One: God also calls us into times of rest, renewal and new experiences -

Two: *so that our spirits can soar, our faith can be deepened,  
and our faith family be enriched by our sharing.*

One: Today we gather in celebration of Christian Family Sunday,

Two: *and we gather to send our minister – a member of our family of faith -  
into sabbatical time with blessings and gratitude.*

One: Holy Source, you have created families of all sizes, and all shapes -  
those based on the physical connections of genes and DNA,  
those shaped by shared experience or living,  
those we choose, and those chosen for us.

Help us to continue to widen our understandings of all a family can be,

so that we may truly create kinship rooted in your love and care  
where all are accepted, all are celebrated, all are connected to the  
Vine of Christ but also to you, our Gardener God.  
Amen

Opening Hymn: "Come in, Come In and Sit Down" VU 395

Refrain: Come in, come in and sit down,  
you are a part of the family.  
We are lost and we are found,  
and we are a part of the family.

You know the reason why you came,  
yet no reason can explain;  
so share in the laughter and cry in the pain,  
for we are a part of the family. R

God is with us in this place,  
like a mother's warm embrace.  
We're all forgiven by God's grace,  
for we are a part of the family. R

There's life to be shared in the bread and the wine;  
we are the branches, Christ is the vine.  
This is God's temple, it's not yours or mine,  
but we are a part of the family. R

There's rest for the weary and health for us all;  
there's a yoke that is easy, and a burden that's small.  
So come in and worship and answer the call,  
for we are a part of the family. R

A Prayer for Christian Family Sunday

Today, O God, we gather on Christian Family Sunday  
to give thanks and to pray for all our families,  
and to remember and give thanks for those who  
have mothered us in a variety of ways.  
We thank you for families that have sheltered us,  
taught us, nurtured us and supported us.  
We offer our prayers for families that are struggling,  
are separated by distance or by pandemic restrictions,  
or where safety and security is not available to all members equally.  
We pray for our faith family, Applewood United Church,

that we continue to learn about each other,  
care for one another, and support each other along life's journey.  
Amen

Scripture Readings: John 15:1-8 *The Message (adapted)*

I am the Real Vine and my Abba God is the Farmer. God cuts off every branch of me that doesn't bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing God prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken.

"Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me.

"I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Abba God shows who they are—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples.

Special Music:

Reflection: Living Connections

Hymn: "Deep in Our Hearts" MV 154

Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;  
deep in our hearts there is a common song;  
deep in our hearts there is a common story,  
telling Creation that we are one.

Deep in our hearts there is a common purpose;  
deep in our hearts there is a common goal;  
deep in our hearts there is a sacred message,  
justice and peace in harmony.

Deep in our hearts there is a common longing;  
deep in our hearts there is a common theme;  
deep in our hearts there is a common current,  
flowing to freedom like a stream.

Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;  
deep in our hearts there is a common song;  
deep in our hearts there is a common story,  
telling Creation that we are one.

Virtual Offering:

One: Today we remember God's gracious gifts of family and community.

Two: *Today we recommit ourselves and our resources  
to supporting God's family near and far.*

One: With gratitude we pray on the offerings we have made, or will make.  
Amen

Sung Response: "You Are Holy" MV 45

You are holy, you show us the way.

You are holy, you show us the way.

You show us, you show us,  
you show us the way.

You show us, you show us,  
you show us the way.

Blessings for Sabbatical Time:

Introduction - The elements of sabbatical time

Sung response: "We Have This Ministry" VU 510 Verses 1 and 2

We have this ministry  
and we are not discouraged;  
it is by God's own power  
that we may live and serve.  
Openly we share God's word,  
speaking truth as we believe,  
praying that the shadowed world  
may healing light receive.  
We have this ministry, O God, receive our living.

O Christ, the tree of life,  
our end and our beginning,  
we grow to fullest flower  
when rooted in your love.  
Brothers, sisters, clergy, lay,  
called to service by your grace,  
different cultures, different gifts,  
the young and old a place.  
We have this ministry, O God, receive our giving.

### Blessings of Prayer

Ian Prentice (Co-chair, Worship Committee):

*Joanne, as you enter sabbatical time may you find space for prayer, for worship, and to connect with Creator God without the responsibilities of creating and presiding over worship for others. May there be time for quiet prayer and contemplation, joyful prayer and praise, and may God be with you on each step of your sabbatical journey.*

Rev. Joanne:

May this community be enlivened by new leadership as you continue to worship together, pray for one another, and find ways to connect with Creator God and one another. You will be in my prayers often as you journey together through this sabbatical time.

### Blessings of Rest

Christina Mulligan for Applewood United Church Staff (Nancy Beatty, Ian Blackport, Jennifer Linghorne, and Leslie West):

*Joanne, we pray that you will find times of deep relaxation and rest during your sabbatical time. May you find books to read, music to enjoy, places to explore and in all you find God's peace and respite from work schedules and deadlines. May God be with you on each step of your sabbatical journey.*

Rev. Joanne:

May the Applewood United Church family and staff find moments to simply enjoy each other's company in the coming months, and continue to be open to new ideas, new music to enjoy, and new experiences to share as you journey together through my sabbatical time.

### Blessings of Learning

Anne Moore (Chair, Affirming Committee, co-leader Exploring Spirit):

*Joanne, during your sabbatical time we pray there will be space for learning and enhancing skills, studying fresh concepts, and exploring ways to see God and Christ in the places, spaces and people you encounter. May sabbatical time bring opportunities to explore and focus on a variety of learning experiences, and may God be with you on each step of your sabbatical journey.*

Rev. Joanne:

May this community of faith continue to learn and grow together, discovering new ways to encounter the sacred in all that you do as we all travel through this sabbatical time.

### Blessings of New Experiences

Erin, Rob and Sam Carruthers for Youth and Children's ministries:

*Joanne, we pray that during your time away from us you will make time for play, but also to find new experiences that can lift your spirit and bring you joy. We hope you will discover new horizons, even if they aren't far from your own back yard, but also new perspectives on the familiar. We pray that you will return safely to share what new things you have learned or experienced, and may God be with you on each step of your sabbatical journey.*

Rev. Joanne

May we all remain open to what new things God can do in us and through us during this time of purposeful separation, and expect the unexpected as we journey through this time.

#### Blessings of Renewal

Scott Perkin for the Executive Committee:

*Joanne, we pray that during your sabbatical, times of leisurely dreaming and focused reflection will bring refreshment. We pray that a release from responsibilities here will create space for rejuvenation and renewal, and may God be with you on each step of your sabbatical journey.*

Rev. Joanne:

I offer my thanks to Applewood United Church for supporting my choice to take a sabbatical time, especially as we continue to live with changes, restrictions and uncertainty through this COVID-19 pandemic. May this community know that I carry each and every one of you in my heart as I set out into sabbatical time, that I will miss you and look forward to being with you once again in September.

#### Final Blessings and Prayers

Uplifting God,

We pray that Joanne will be refreshed by her time away,  
journeying to find you in more places and more spaces.

Be with her as she sees you in the faces of her children and her grandchild.

Holy Spirit, guide her steps and have her return to this community:  
enlivened, inspired and encouraged to live out her call.

We pray for the Applewood United Church family,  
that they too find moments of refreshment as they worship  
and work together over the coming weeks,  
and that they will look forward with joy to Joanne's return.  
Hold us all in your love and care God – through changes,  
through absences, through shifts and turns,  
and remind us of our deep connections to you and one another,  
one family, a sacred branch connected to your sacred Vine,  
we pray in Jesus name. Amen

*The blessing for Rev. Joanne was written by her sister, Barbara Finlay*

#### Closing Music: "Would You Bless Our Homes and Families" VU 556

Would you bless our homes and families,  
Source of life who calls us here;  
in our world of stress and tension  
teach us love that conquers fear.  
Help us learn to love each other  
with a love that constant stays;  
teach us when we face our troubles,  
love's expressed in many ways.

When our way is undemanding,  
let us use the time that's ours  
to delight in simple pleasures,  
sharing joys in gentle hours.  
When our way is anxious walking  
and a heavy path we plod,  
teach us trust in one another  
and in you, our gracious God.

From the homes in which we're nurtured,  
with the love that shapes us there,  
teach us, God, to claim as family  
every one whose life we share.  
And through all that life may offer,  
may we in your love remain;  
may the love we share in families  
be alive to praise your name.

Let us reach beyond the boundaries  
of our daily thought and care  
till the family you have chosen  
spills its love out everywhere.  
Help us learn to love each other  
with a love that constant stays;  
teach us when we face our troubles  
love's expressed in many ways.

Commissioning:

As we leave this time of worship, may God, who sang the universe into being, lead you,  
and may Jesus Christ, God's love song to the world, attend you,  
and may the Holy Spirit surround you as God's love is sung into each and every heart,  
each and every day.

Amen

Sung Blessing: "Go Now in Peace" (Don Besig and Nancy Price)

Rev. Joanne's Reflection                      Living Connections

I do love grapes – in bunches, in jelly or jam, in juice. Indeed grape jelly reminds me of my own childhood and family, as much as the taste of Welch's grape juice reminds me of the many faith families with whom I have shared communion over the years. When we first moved to Mississauga, a grape vine had been planted along the fence in our back yard, and was a source of food not only for our family, but the birds who called that space home. Grapes were abundant and a staple in Jesus' time, were eaten fresh but also dried as raisins for storage, were used to create a thickened juice used for sweetening that was called 'grape honey', and of course for wine.

The grapevine would have been an extremely common sight for those who followed Jesus. Many would know how to grow and prune their own grapevines, would know the satisfaction of a good harvest, and would understand the relationship between the strong vine and the branches bearing fruit. It was and is a living connection, and I believe it would have been particularly significant for those followers to hear Jesus speak of himself as the vine, and themselves as branches – turning the everyday into the sacred.

This living and loving connection between ourselves and God in Christ, between ourselves and one another, is good to remember and to celebrate on this Christian Family Sunday. Like the vine and the branches those connections we have are alive- not only physically but also emotionally and spiritually. Like the strength and the source of life that we find in Jesus our sacred Vine, our bonds as faith family can also give us strength and life, and help us to produce the fruit of compassion, of justice, of faith and of compassionate care for one another.

We are intimately linked, Jesus tells us, able to flourish because we are connected to the Source. But how do we keep that connection? How do we remain healthy and fruitful? Like any growing thing, we need energy, we need light, we need water – and we even need times of darkness and rest. We could find energy in the virtual time we share together, and light in the words of scripture or in the words of others lifted in prayer. We might find our source of water-particularly the living variety – as we worship together. Rest may come in a time of quiet prayer or contemplation, or in the silence after listening to a moving or inspirational piece of music – it is a time when we allow ourselves to feel God's presence fully.

May you celebrate your connections today – with faith family, with chosen family, with the families that raised us and shaped us. May you feel those connections even at a distance, even separated by time and space. May you know that we are supported, strengthened, and given life and vitality by our one true vine Jesus the Christ. Amen