

**ZOOM Worship for October 17, 2021**  
**World Food Sunday**  
**Highlighting Mission and Service and created by the United Church**

**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: “Every day is a day of Thanksgiving” MV 185**

Every day is a day of thanksgiving.  
God, you’ve been so good to me.  
Ev’ry day you’re blessing me.  
Ev’ry day is a day of thanksgiving.  
I will glorify you, O my Lord, today!

You keep blessing me, blessing me, blessing me.  
You opened the door that I might see,  
you're blessing me.  
And you keep blessing me, blessing me, blessing me.  
I will glorify you, O my Lord, today!

**Call to Worship and Opening Prayer**

One: We gather on sacred ground  
*Two: on the rich earth that nourishes us*  
One: under the great awning of sky that replenishes us  
*Two: to once again listen to the voice*  
One: that warms our hearts say,  
*Two: “Come, follow me.”*  
One: Friends, in John 4:34 Jesus says, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work.” Food is the source of our energy. What Jesus was saying is that the will of God energizes him to live out his mission. As we pray, we turn to God to replenish our sense of call and purpose. Let us pray:  
*Two: God, the stories of our faith remind us that you are manna from heaven and water from rock. You are the miracle of the loaves and fish. You are our Bread of Life.*  
One: In this hour, fill us up with your Holy Word. Energize us with your songs.  
Make us thankful, aware, and inspired:  
*Two: thankful for the universe that feeds us, aware that food is a sacred gift given to all and yet still withheld from many, and inspired enough to make a difference.*  
*Amen.*

**Opening Hymn: “Let us Build a House” MV 1 verses 1, 3, 5**

Let us build a house where love can dwell  
and all can safely live,

a place where saints and children tell  
how hearts learn to forgive.  
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,  
rock of faith and vault of grace;  
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:

All are welcome, all are welcome,  
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where love is found  
in water, wine and wheat;  
a banquet hall on holy ground,  
where peace and justice meet.  
Here the love of God, through Jesus  
is revealed in time and space;  
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:

All are welcome, all are welcome,  
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where all are named,  
their songs and visions heard  
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed  
as words within the Word.  
Built of tears and cries and laughter,  
prayers of faith and songs of grace;  
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:

All are welcome, all are welcome,  
all are welcome in this place.

**Prayer for Reflection and Revelation** *A Grace from the Iona Community by Kathy Galloway (adapted)*

Jesus, our Friend,

it's good to know  
that you lived in the flesh,  
walked where we walk,  
felt what we feel,  
had sore and dirty feet,  
and needed to eat.

But it's even better to know  
that you enjoyed your food,  
the feel of perfume on your skin,  
the wind on your face,  
a child in your arms,  
and good wine at the wedding.

Thank you for sharing in all our pain and pleasure;  
and thank you for joining us at table  
whenever the hungry are fed,  
whenever the lonely are supported,  
whenever justice is done.

**Sung Response: “For Food in a World” VU 551**

For food in a world where many walk in hunger;  
for faith in a world where many walk in fear;  
for friends in a world where many walk alone,  
we give you humble thanks, O Lord.

**Scripture Readings:**

Isaiah 58:9b–11

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Matthew 13:1–9

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: “Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!”

**Musical Offering: “You Are My Rock”**

**Reflection:** “Live Your Mission” (*a sermon from the United Church of Canada*)

**Hymn: “Christ Has No Body Now but Yours” MV 171**

Refrain

Christ has no body now but yours, no hands but yours.  
Here on this earth, yours is the work,  
to serve with the joy of compassion.

No hands but yours to heal the wounded world,  
No hands but yours to soothe all its suffering, no touch but yours  
to bind the broken hope of the people of God. R

No eyes but yours to see as Christ would see,  
to find the lost, to gaze with compassion; no eyes but yours to  
glimpse the holy joy of the city of God. R

No feet but yours to journey with the poor,  
to walk this world with mercy and justice. Yours are the steps to  
build a lasting peace for the children of God. R

Through ev’ry gift, give back to those in need:  
as Christ has blessed, so now be his blessing, with ev’ry gift a  
benediction, be to the people of God. R

**Virtual Offering:**

One: Our generosity matters. With God's help, our offering makes a difference in peoples' lives every day. Let us give generously as we worship God through sharing our gifts, tithes, and offerings.

Two: *Generous God, we offer our gifts in response to your call to care. We offer them with gratitude and love, trusting that you will use them to feed bodies, minds, and hearts. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.*

**Sung Response: "You Nourish Us" VU 545**

You nourish us with food, O God,  
for body and for soul;  
our love and service is our thanks,  
for life that's free and whole,  
for life that's free and whole.

**Prayers of the People:**

One: Creator God,  
Bless farmers, fishers, gatherers, hunters, migrant workers...all agricultural workers here in Canada and around the world.  
Bless those who transport, distribute, and prepare our food.  
Bless those pouring their heart and soul into fostering and protecting clean water, healthy soil, and biodiversity.

Two: *Bless those advocating for safe, healthy, culturally appropriate food.  
Bless those challenging systems that treat food as a commodity rather than a sacred right.  
Bless those working hard to understand where their food comes from and to have a healthy relationship with it.*

One: Bless those who share what they can so no one goes hungry.  
Bless the breakfast programs, community kitchens, shared gardens, food banks, and agricultural training programs we support through Mission & Service.  
Bless our church suppers and barbecues when we can return to them.  
Bless our coffee hour – virtual or eventually in person.  
Bless our home kitchens, our tables, and all who gather around them.

Two: *Bless us as we bow our heads in thanksgiving for your abundant grace.  
Bless us now as we pray in the way of Jesus, singing, "Our father..."*

**The Lord's Prayer (sung) VU 960**

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,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

**Closing Hymn: “Go Forth for God” VU 418**

Go forth for God, go to the world in peace;  
be of good courage, armed with heavenly grace,  
in God's good Spirit daily to increase,  
till in the kingdom we see face to face.  
Go forth for God, go to the world in peace.

Go forth for God, go to the world in love;  
strengthen the faint, give courage to the weak;  
help the afflicted; richly from above  
God's love supplies the grace and power we seek.  
Go forth for God, go to the world in love.

Go forth for God, go to the world in strength;  
hold fast the good, be urgent for the right;  
render to no one evil; Christ at length  
shall overcome all darkness with his light.  
Go forth for God, go to the world in strength.

Go forth for God, go to the world in joy,  
to serve God's people every day and hour,  
and serving Christ, our every gift employ,  
rejoicing in the Holy Spirit's power.  
Go forth for God, go to the world in joy.

**Commissioning /Blessing****Musical Benediction: “When you walk from here” VU 298**

When you walk from here,  
when you walk from here,  
walk with justice, walk with mercy,  
and with God's humble care.

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**Reflection****“Live Your Mission”**

*(a sermon from the United Church of Canada)*

Do you know what it's like to put every ounce of ability and energy into something and have it flop miserably? Do you know what it's like to do your best and find that your best just isn't good enough? Do you know what it's like to wait for something good in your life to grow and then wait...and wait...and wait?

That day when Jesus was sitting in the boat in the middle of the sea, he was speaking to a worn-out crowd that felt just like that. His followers had been working hard—really hard—to share the good

news, but the message wasn't sinking in. Here they were, going from town to town, sharing Jesus' life-saving message that justice is attainable, that there are key values like kindness and generosity that, if lived out collectively, could save the world. Yet despite their important message, everywhere they went, they brushed up against people who were too preoccupied, too bored, too self-centred, or too stressed to listen. Each time a door slammed in their face, their discouragement ramped up. It wasn't supposed to be like this.

Even though Jesus was sitting in the middle of the sea, it's like he could see into the very hearts of those gathered that day. And in that calm, reassuring voice of his, he told them stories to help them understand themselves and make sense of their life. One of them was the parable of the sower:

Some seeds will fall on the path and the birds will eat them. Some will fall on rock and the sun will scorch them. Some will fall on thorns and be choked out. But some will fall on good soil and bear an unbelievable crop.

The Parable of the Sower was a pep talk of sorts. It wasn't the kind you would hear in a locker room, though. It wasn't about how great Jesus' followers were or how they would succeed at every turn. It was realistic: Some of the work you do is going to feel like a waste of time. Some of it will even be sabotaged. But keep going. Because there will be success. Trust me. Live your mission.

This, friends, is a millennia-old message we still need to hear. Especially on World food Sunday.

690,000,000 people will go to bed hungry tonight. Think about that. 690,000,000 people aren't asking, "What will we eat for dinner?" No. 690,000,000 people are asking, "Will we eat dinner?" And they ask that question night after night.

Hunger is so pervasive you'd think that the whole earth was made of dust. That no crops could grow anywhere. But we know there's nothing wrong with Mother Nature; the problem lies in the choices we make for her.

Poverty, land grabbing, climate change, the commodification of food and water, conflict and political instability.... The causes of hunger are so complex, so intertwined, so systemic, it's natural to wonder how you and I are really ever going to make a difference.

It's like we are standing on that shore right along with Jesus' disciples and there are problems as big as the sea itself in front of us.

And even Jesus is sitting there admitting that addressing hunger isn't easy. He doesn't sugarcoat the outcome of our work: some seeds just aren't going to land where we need them to or create the results we want.

But, he says, some seeds will fall on good soil and the result will be phenomenal.

So live your mission.

Jesus got in the boat that day and rowed into the sea so he could look at the whole crowd at once, so his voice would carry across the water to each and every one of them, so they would take his parable to heart and hear him say: Live your mission.

Friends, one of the ways we live our mission as a United Church is by sharing what we have through our collective Mission & Service.

As a United Church we endorse the principles of food sovereignty: the right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. We believe food is a sacred gift from God. Manna from heaven. No one should go hungry.

That's why from coast to coast in Canada, our generosity supports community kitchens and meal programs, food cupboards, shelters, job training programs, community gardens, and healthy food programs. Internationally, we send food in times of crisis, distribute seeds, fund agricultural training programs and micro-lending programs, and support projects that help small-scale farmers access equipment they need and, in some instances, build infrastructure so they can transport their food to market. We work with partners like ACT Alliance and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank to move beyond the charity model by helping to work toward long-term systemic change through respectful partnerships.

It's true that we aren't going to solve all the problems in the world, but for some people our support means the world.

You might remember a story the United Church's Philanthropy Unit shared not long ago about a [young Canadian named Jesse](#). When he was 12 years old, Jesse had a traumatic brain injury. His life instantly changed because his brain didn't function the way it once did. By the time he was 17, Jesse had been hospitalized 32 times. Through the ups and downs, his mother took care of him. She was his rock. And then, sadly, three years ago she died of cancer. Without his mother, Jesse's life spiralled out of control. Two years ago, he survived the painfully cold winter sleeping in a storage unit. Then he went to Stella's Circle, a Mission & Service partner, where he was fed, received help to find a home, and is now completing a greenhouse technician college program. Today, [Jesse is leading a new social enterprise](#) that grows food for sale.

This, friends, is what happens when seeds of generosity fall on good soil.

Another story, this one stretching from Canada to Japan and then on to Kenya: In Kenya, more than 850,000 children have been orphaned due to HIV/AIDS. Some estimates are even higher. Emmanuel Baya, a farmer living in Magarini, Kenya, lost his parents when he was a child. So when he saw children looking for food under the cashew trees on his property, he felt a tug on his heart strings. To make a long story short, he opened a children's centre and school for orphans. But he didn't want to just nourish their bodies and minds, he also wanted them to be able to one day sustain themselves. And he knew he needed more skills to help. So he flew to the Asian Rural Institute in Japan, ARI for short. ARI is an agricultural training institute that teaches organic farming techniques and leadership skills and it is supported through your Mission & Service gifts. When he graduated from the program there, Emmanuel returned home and started an organic demonstration farm next to his school. Today, not only are the 287 children in his care learning how to grow food, but the farm is also serving seven neighbouring communities. Volunteers at the farm are also receiving agricultural training at ARI thanks to your support.

690,000,000 people may be going hungry tonight. But Jesse and Emmanuel and all the people in their communities that they support and the thousands of people that Mission & Service partners help aren't among them.

That's because they are amazing people, and they are supported by amazing people like you.

This is what happens when we live our mission.

Living God's mission is like planting seeds—each seed contains the basic material needed to pull off a miracle. And like Jesus says, when they hit good dirt, miracles grow.

Thank you for your mission and service. Thank you for taking Jesus' stories into your heart and letting them transform your lives. Thank you for standing on the shoreline like disciples have for millennia listening to the Parable of the Sower.

Now, let's get to work planting seeds. Let's live our mission.

Amen.