

Hybrid Worship for September 4, 2022

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: "Open Our Hearts" MV 21

Open our hearts, open our minds.
Open our lives to you O loving God.
Open our hearts, open our minds.
Open our lives to you O loving God.

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

One: God says, "I have made you, and I know you."

All: We respond with voices full of praise.

One: God says, "I am always with you."

All: We respond with grateful hearts.

One: God says, "You are mine and I love you."

All: We respond with our lives and our actions.

One: We say, "God has made us, and knows us,
God is with us, and we are loved."

**All: In our worship and our witness, we declare
our belonging in Beloved Community.**

One: Let us pray together:

**All: Loved and Loving God,
you know us so well – have always known us.
Help us to seek your presence, and open us
to your mysterious touch, so that we can both
be inspired and inspire others to follow your way
of love, justice and peace.
Remind us that you call us into a community of
Belovedness where all are welcome, all are valued,
all are encouraged to support each other in love.
Amen**

Opening Hymn: “Come and Find the Quiet Centre” VU 374

Come and find the quiet centre
in the crowded life we lead,
find the room for hope to enter,
find the frame where we are freed:
clear the chaos and the clutter,
clear our eyes, that we can see
all the things that really matter,
be at peace, and simply be.

Silence is a friend who claims us,
cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us,
knows our being, face to face,
making space within our thinking,
lifting shades to show the sun,
raising courage when we're shrinking,
finding scope for faith begun.

In the Spirit let us travel,
open to each other's pain,
let our loves and fears unravel,
celebrate the space we gain:
there's a place for deepest dreaming,
there's a time for heart to care,
in the Spirit's lively scheming
there is always room to spare!

Prayer for Reflection and Revelation “To Know You in All Things” *from the collection “The Green Heart of the Snowdrop”*

Weave a web of your presence around me today.
Be with my hands as they work.
Be with my eyes as they see.
Be with my ears as they hear.
Be with my tongue as it speaks.
Be with my feelings and my thoughts.
Be with the people I meet.
Be with the things I make.
Be with the decisions I take.
Be in and through,
over and under all,
that doing and hearing and seeing,
speaking and making and being,

I may glimpse your glory,
hear your voice
and joyfully work with you
to create a new heaven and a new earth.

Sung Response: “Take, O, Take Me As I Am” MV 85

Take, O take me as I am;
summon out what I shall be;
set your seal upon my heart
and live in me.

Scripture Readings:

Psalms 139:1-6, 13-18

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you.

Luke 14:25-33 *The Inclusive Bible*

Large crowds followed Jesus. He turned to them and said, If any of you come to me without turning your back on your mother and your father, your loved ones, your sisters and brothers, indeed your very self, you can't be my follower. Anyone who doesn't take up the cross and follow me can't be my disciple.

If one of you were going to build a tower, wouldn't you first sit down and calculate the outlay to see if you have enough money to complete the project? You'd do that for fear of laying the foundation and then not being able to complete the work -- because anyone who saw it would jeer at you and say, ' You started a building and couldn't finish it.'

Or if the leaders of one country were going to declare war on another country, wouldn't they first sit down and consider whether, with an army of ten thousand, they could win against an enemy coming against them with twenty thousand? If they couldn't, they'd send a delegation while the enemy is still at a distance, asking for terms of peace.

So count the cost. You can't be my disciple if you don't say goodbye to all of your possessions.

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Musical Reflection: "Bread of Life"

Reflection: Well known

Hymn: "Will you come and follow me" VU 567

Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare

should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see
if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free
and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean,
and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean
in you and you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?

Christ, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

Time of Offering

Offering Prayer:

One: Generous and Loving God, you have formed us and know us,

All: you provide the world with all it needs for flourishing.

One: We offer what we have – our time, our talents, our resources,

**All: so receive the gifts we offer, multiply them,
and use them in the work of grace and justice.
In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen**

Sung Response: "Grant Us, God, the Grace" VU 540

Grant us, God, the grace of giving,
with a spirit large and free,
that ourselves and all our living
we may offer faithfully.

Sacrament of Communion

One: The Spirit of God be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Turn to God, the source of life.

All: We lift our hearts in prayer.

One: Let us give thanks.

All: We offer joyful thanks to God.

One: Source and Sustainer of life,
we gather at this table to offer thanks,
and to taste afresh
the wonder of a holy love.
In companionship with all creatures,
we are one in gratitude
for the gift and mystery of life,
and one in longing for a world reborn.

Two: Creator and Friend,
we praise you for your presence
in and with your creation,
ever drawing it toward healing and wholeness.
In our joy, you are the overflowing cup;
in our need, you are the bread
by which we journey on.
With all who abide in your presence and care,
we lift our voices to sing:

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: Let us remember together that vision of God's reign
shown to us in Jesus at table:

All: he shared food with followers and friends,

One: with saints and sinners,

All: with crowds of thousands on the hillside,

One: and a few friends in an upper room.

**All: On the night before he died,
he had supper with his companions.**

One: He took a loaf of bread, and after giving thanks,

he broke it, and gave it to them, saying:

All: "Take, eat.

Do this in remembrance of me."

One: Then, he took a cup, and after giving thanks,
he passed it among them, saying:

All: "Drink this.

Do this in remembrance of me."

One: Through this loaf and cup, Jesus lives within us.

All: In word and deed, Jesus lives among us.

Two: Eternal God, we unite in this covenant of faith,
as we break bread and share the cup,
giving thanks for your love in Jesus, the Christ.
We spread your table with these gifts of the earth
and of our labour.

We present to you our very lives,
committed to your service
on behalf of all people.

We remember Jesus:

All: On Good Friday he died.

On Easter he rose again.

Today he lives forever.

One: We pray you, God of Love,
send your Holy Spirit upon us and what we do here,
that we, and these gifts,
touched by your Spirit,
may be signs of life and love to each other,
and to all the world.

Two: 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 earth, and the fragile web of life we share . . .
for our families and friends . . .

The Lord's Prayer (sung VU 959)

Our Father, in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done
On earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread,
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil,
For the kingdom, the power and glory are yours
now and forever. Amen

One: Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory is yours, God most holy,
now and forever.

All: (sung) MV 205

Amen, Amen, O Holy One!
Hosanna and Amen!
Amen, Amen, O Holy One!
Hosanna and Amen!

Breaking the Bread and Filling the Cup

(If you are worshipping with us virtually, the moment to consume your bread and juice will be announced, and you might say the words "Jesus Christ the True Vine" and "Jesus Christ the Bread of Life." If you are worshipping in the sanctuary, your elements will be delivered to you, and we ask that you wait until the servers have returned to the communion table before your lift your mask and consume them.)

Prayer after Communion

**All: We give thanks that bread broken brings wholeness;
that wine poured out replenishes;
that time spent with the Risen Christ
and one another is gift and grace. Amen.**

Closing Hymn: "Hymn for Labour Day" (Tune VU 333)

All our work and all our being
come from you, most gracious God.
Ev'ry task which lies before us
is Creator's will outpoured.
Help us as we build your kin-dom
know we labor not in vain;
give us sure and deep conviction
for the tasks that you ordain.

Some may nurture those who hunger,
tend and heal the broken heart;

set our flagging spirits dancing,
spark our vision through their art.
Others teach and offer counsel,
bear life's burdens, ease its care;
strive for justice, peace, and freedom
for all people ev'rywhere.

Let us labor in the knowledge
that no task can be too small;
that the God who stretched the heavens
no less shaped the least of all.
Give us strength, God, to accomplish
what you set our hands to do,
that by serving those around us,
we return the gift to you.

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Commissioning /Blessing

May God, who sang the universe into being, go with you.
May Christ, who is God's love song to the world, attend you.
May the Holy Spirit continue to sing God's love
into each and every heart, each and every day.

Sung Amen VU 974

Amen! Amen! Hallelujah, Amen!

Rev. Joanne's Reflection

How many of us can say that we know another person completely? Partners who have been together for decades, perhaps, parents of newborns who have examined every millimetre of their infants little bodies, maybe, life-long friends who have shared joys and sorrows, possibly. The picture that is presented in this beautiful psalm today is of a God that knows us in a way that is beyond our human understanding or experience.

In today's language, we might say that God knows us as people, but also as God's creations – so intimately that we might imagine God knowing us at a molecular level. God knows our DNA, how we are formed and made in each cell and each minute particle that is part of our human selves. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it," writes the psalmist. Indeed, even when we have electron microscopes that can illuminate the foreign landscape of the infinitely small, or other technologies that allow us to see inside our bodies, it can be challenging to imagine that God knows every bit of us.

It is not only the physical that our writer includes in God's knowledge of us. God knows our thoughts, our ways, our words before we speak them, and God is with us always. This is the Creator that is as close as our breath, conversing with a reluctant Moses through the burning bush, calling again and again to Samuel, sending messengers to a young woman who will soon become pregnant with God's Hope and Love. This is the God that is present in our darkest moments and our greatest joys – loving us, calling us, knowing us.

For some of us, this intimate relationship may be a source of comfort – an understanding that no matter the circumstances in which we find ourselves, God is there – “In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us, we are not alone” as we read in our United Church's *A New Creed* – echoed in the final words of the portion of Psalm 139 included today, “I come to the end—I am still with you.” In our everyday moments or the exceptional ones, we are accompanied and accepted by our loving Creator.

For some of us, it can be challenging to accept this understanding of an all-knowing and intimately connected God, especially when humanity can act cruelly, selfishly, and even viciously toward others and creation. How can God who knows us so well, who knows us physically, emotionally, spiritually - allow hate to rule some hearts? How can I accept that God knows me – every ugly or unkind thought, every mistake and misstep, every time I have hesitated or felt my faith waiver, and yet still loves me, still seeks a relationship with me, still calls me to follow the ways of justice, love and peace? Perhaps this intimate knowing can feel intrusive, and we can feel a desire to dismiss God's persistent presence.

Our faith tradition certainly contains stories of those who wanted to stay hidden from God's presence, beginning with Adam and Eve in the garden. Jonah, too wanted to run from God rather than face the people of Nineveh, and that tale reminds us of God's creative persistence through whale bellies and storms. Saul of Tarsus was really running from God as he persecuted the followers of Jesus, but God found him, and in that finding Saul is transformed on the road to Damascus. Even when we seek distance from God, the mystery of God's love seeks us out.

The children's book *The Runaway Bunny* by Margaret Wise Brown is now eighty years old, but was a favourite in my home, and perhaps yours, too. It is the tale of a bunny who wants to run away from its mother, and the mother's answers to each of the little bunny's ideas. The story begins “I am running away,” the little bunny says. “I will run after you, for you are my little bunny,” the mother says. The story is as old as humankind. It's the story at the center of the bible. It's our story. It is a delightful and tender illustration of love that is relentless and persistent – like God's love for us in the face of our own very human need to feel independent and separate.

I think this intimate relationship is really at the heart of Jesus' words to his followers in our gospel passage today. In order to walk the way of Jesus, the way of close and personal connection to God, we must put aside what we think we know about our relationships with others, or even ourselves. We are asked to turn away from thinking about what we may possess, and enter fully into God-centered and God-accepting life. Our focus shifts to what we have to what we can be – beloved and known by God, ready to serve as we carry the crosses of hope and God's love into the world.

What does it look like to accept and live into God's knowledge of us and of God's persistent presence? Well, Jesus says, there will be planning. There will be costs, and the realities of our times. In our life together as Applewood United Church we work to affirm and acknowledge the belovedness of each person, and the worth of our relationship with God as individuals and community. We also plan, and in the days and weeks to come there will be even more planning and discerning as we seek to live out our call to be the people of God and followers of Jesus in this time and place – counting the costs and celebrating the mystery of God's presence and love.

However we perceive God's intimate knowledge of us, as joy and comfort or challenge, we can acknowledge that this mystery of inescapable presence is also God's gift. We name it grace – that love of God that is made known to us in Jesus. We need only accept it, and like that little bunny who responds to his persistent and loving parent "Shucks, I might as well stay where I am and be your little bunny," we can find joy, purpose, belonging and acceptance in our relationship with God as we seek to follow the way of Jesus.

Amen