

**May 7, 2023**  
**Fifth Sunday of Easter**

**We Gather In God's Presence**

**Prelude:** "Our Great Saviour" Rowland H. Pritchard arr. Melody Bober

**Lighting the Christ Candle**

**Moment of Silent Reflection**

**Birthdays, Celebrations, and Life and Work of the Congregation – see last page ...**

**Call to Worship**

When we were children, we chanted;

**Sticks and stones may break our bones, but names will never hurt us.**

As we grew up we learned two things;

**The names we are called can and do hurt us,**

And stones don't always hurt us.

**You, Lord, are our rock,**

Our fortress and our refuge.

**You offer shelter from the storms of life.**

You are the rock of our salvation, And we worship You.

**Hymn: VU 402 "We Are One"**

We are one as we come, as we come, joyful to be here,  
in the praise on our lips there's a sense that God is near.

We are one as we sing, as we seek, we are found;  
and we come needful of God's grace as we meet, together in this place.

We are one as we share, as we share brokenness and fear,  
in the touch of a hand there's a sense that God is here.  
We are one as we care, as we heal, we are healed;  
and we share warmth in God's embrace as we pray together in this place.

We are one as we feast, as we feast, peace becomes the sign;  
in the bread and the wine there's a sense of love divine.  
We are one as we come, as we feed, we are fed;  
and we feel God's refreshing grace as we meet at table in this place.

We are one as we hear, as we hear, heart and hand unite;  
in the word we receive there's a sense that God is light.  
We are one as we leave, as we love, we are loved;  
and we seek justice in God's ways as we move together from this place.

**Prayer** (*unison*)

Holy One, our rock and our redeemer, we come to you as stones, as diamonds in the rough. Sometimes, when others seek our strength, we are too soft, and we crumble like coal. Sometimes, when people need us to be gracious, we are too hard, like granite, and we break. Sometimes, when people need a neighbor, we turn a sharp chipped edge, like flint, that cuts to the core. We are like many kinds of stone, but you, O Lord, you call us to be living stones; to build ourselves into a spiritual house, founded on Christ, our cornerstone. Cut and grind and polish away our sharp edges and our impurities, until we shine brilliantly, reflecting your light and life through the many facets of our community and of our ministries. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## **We Are Blessed By God**

**Solo: "His Eye Is On The Sparrow"**

Shannon Wakeling

**Time for the Young and the Young @**



**Hymn VV 92 "Like a Rock"**

Like a rock, like a rock, God is under our feet.  
Like the starry night sky God is over our head.  
Like the sun on the horizon God is ever before.  
Like the river runs to ocean, our home is in God evermore.

**Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16 VU 758 part 1 and 3**

**Refrain: I trust in you, you are my God.**

In you, O God, I have taken refuge;  
let me never be put to shame.

**Deliver me in your righteousness;  
incline your ear; come quickly to my rescue.**

**Refrain: I trust in you, you are my God.**

Be my rock of refuge, a stronghold to keep me safe.  
**You are indeed my rock and fortress;  
lead me and guide me for your own name's sake.**

Release me from the net that they hid for me,  
for you are my protector.

**Into your hands I commend my spirit,  
for you have redeemed me, O God of truth.**

**Refrain: I trust in you, you are my God.**

My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands  
of my enemies, from those who pursue me.

**Let your face shine on your servant,  
and save me, for your mercy's sake.**

**Refrain: I trust in you, you are my God.**

**Scripture: Acts 7:55-60**

But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him, and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

*The other readings for this week are: 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14*

**Meditation: "Stoner, or Stoned?"**

### **Hymn VU 331** “The Church’s One Foundation”

The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ our Lord;  
we are his new creation by water and the Word;  
from heaven he came and sought us that we might ever be  
his living servant people, by his own death set free.

Called forth from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth;  
one charter of salvation: one Lord, one faith, one birth.  
One holy name professing and at one table fed,  
to one hope always pressing, by Christ's own Spirit led.

Though with a scornful wonder the world sees us oppressed,  
by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed,  
yet saints their watch are keeping; their cry goes up, 'How long?'  
But soon the night of weeping shall be the morn of song.

Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of our war,  
we wait the consummation of peace forevermore;  
till with the vision glorious our longing eyes are blest,  
and the great church victorious shall be the church at rest.

We now on earth have union with God the Three in One,  
and share through faith communion with those whose rest is won.  
Oh, happy ones, and holy! Lord, give us grace that we  
like them, the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with thee.

### **We Respond To God’s Grace**

#### **Invitation to Invest in God’s Mission**

God has chosen us to be a holy nation, a royal priesthood that we may proclaim God’s mighty acts. The work of proclaiming those acts, and living in the way of Jesus takes the commitment of all of us who are God’s chosen ones. We give our time, our skills, our money, even our very lives to proclaim the good news of God’s eternal kingdom. Our tithes and offerings will now be accepted, via CanadaHelps and Canada Post, the offering plate or the mailslot.

#### **Offertory Hymn MV 191** “What Can I Do”

What can I do? What can I bring?  
What can I say? What can I sing?  
I’ll sing with joy. I’ll say a prayer.  
I’ll bring my love. I’ll do my share.

#### **Prayer of Dedication**

O God, this is the offering of our time, skills, and treasure. May these gifts be used with wisdom and justice in the church and throughout the world. Amen.

## **Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession & The Lord's Prayer**

*(with refrain VU 400)*

**Lord, listen to your children praying,  
send us love, send us power, send us grace.**

Gracious God, you call people from near and far into the fellowship of your church. Continue to watch over this congregation, we pray; disturb our complacency; fill it again and again with your Spirit; deepen our faith and our relationship with you, so that we might continue to be faithful co-workers with you – that all the world might see and praise you. This week we also pray for our sister church, Brigden United Church, and their spiritual leader, the Rev. Deanna Gibson.

**Lord, listen to your children praying,  
send us love, send us power, send us grace.**

Sovereign God, guide the rulers of the nations. Move them to set aside their egos, fears, greed, and vain ambition, and recognize your sovereignty. Inspire them to strive for Your peace and justice, that all your children may dwell secure, free of war and injustice. This week we pray for the people of India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

**Lord, listen to your children praying,  
send us love, send us power, send us grace.**

Creative God, restore among us a love of the earth you created for our home. Help us to put an end to ravishing its land, air, and waters, and give us respect for all your creatures, that, living in harmony with everything you have made, your whole creation may resound in an anthem of praise to your glorious name.

**Lord, listen to your children praying,  
send us love, send us power, send us grace.**

Merciful God, hear the cries of the world's hungry and suffering. Give us, who consume most of the earth's resources, the will to reorder our lives, that all may have their rightful share of the food, water, medical care, and shelter, and so have the necessities of a life of dignity.

**Lord, listen to your children praying,  
send us love, send us power, send us grace.**

Holy God, renew our nation in the ways of justice and peace. Guide those who make and administer our laws to build a society based on trust and respect. Erase prejudices that oppress; free us from crime and violence; guard our youth from the perils of substance abuse and materialism. Give all citizens a new vision of a life of harmony.

**Lord, listen to your children praying,  
send us love, send us power, send us grace.**

Compassionate God, look on all who suffer. Support with your love those with incurable and stigmatized diseases; those unjustly imprisoned; those denied dignity; those who live without hope; those who are homeless or abandoned. As you have moved toward us in love, so lead us to be present with them in their suffering in the name of Jesus Christ.

**Lord, listen to your children praying,  
send us love, send us power, send us grace.**

Loving God, sustain those among us who need your healing touch.

Give hope to the dying and comfort those who mourn, and make whole the sick. We pray for all who are ill, their loved ones and caregivers, especially we pray for .....

and those known only in the silence of our own hearts...

O God, in your loving purpose answer our prayers and fulfil our hopes, for these things we ask in Jesus' name, who taught us to pray, saying,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come,  
you will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For yours is the kingdom,  
the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever.  
Amen.**

**Hymn VU 623** "Dear Weaver of Our Lives' Design"

Dear weaver of our lives' design  
whose patterns all obey,  
with skillful fingers gently guide  
the sturdy threads that will survive  
the tangle of our days,  
the tangle of our days.

Take up the fabric of our lives  
with hands that gently hold;  
bind in the ragged edge that care  
would sunder and that pain would tear,  
and mend our ravelling souls,  
and mend our ravelling souls.

Let eyes that in the plainest cloth  
a hidden beauty see  
discern in us our richest hues,  
show us the patterns we may use  
to set our spirits free,  
to set our spirits free.

**Commissioning and Benediction**

Go, and be not a stoner, one who seeks to perpetuate the injustices of the status quo,  
Be not a bystander, doing no good for any, allowing the status quo to continue unquestioned,  
but be like the one who was stoned for speaking out, that the mind of God might be known and the will of God be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

**And may God who makes us, Christ who makes us free,  
And the Holy Spirit who makes us one go with us, this day and always. Amen.**

**Response: MV 220** “Hope Shines as the Solitary Star”

Hope shines as the solitary star.

Faith is the inner light.

You and I together mirror the Light of Lights,  
and illumine the pathway home.

**Postlude:** “The Church’s One Foundation” Samuel S. Wesley. Arr. Cindy Berry

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **ALL:**

You are invited to the launch of The Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Crittenden’s new book,  
*Leisure Resurrected: Rekindling the Fire of Early Christian Communities*

**TODAY**, May 7, 2023, 1 to 2:30 p.m. at Metropolitan United Church, 468 Wellington Street, London.

### **DORCHESTER:**

A **Greeter sign-up sheet** is available on the table at the rear of the sanctuary. Greeters will meet attendees at the Sanctuary entrance before each service, perform the candle duties at beginning of service and bring the offering forward to be blessed. Please take a moment to pick a Sunday and sign up.

### **UNION:**

**Books, Blooms, and Baking (and more)** @ Union United Church 6008 Stone Church Road, Union May 13, 2023 from 9 to 11:30 a.m. All you last minute shoppers, come and find the perfect gift for mom for Mother’s Day (May 14), browse items on offer from our vendors, or enjoy a cup of coffee and a visit with a friend.

You are cordially invited to **Opening New Doors**, a celebration of Indwell’s progress toward creating 100 affordable and supportive apartment homes in St. Thomas.

Thursday, May 18, 2023 5:00-7:00pm

St. Thomas-Elgin Public Art Centre 301 Talbot Street

Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/opening-new-doors-tickets-611365289037>

The Outreach Focus for the month of May is: **Second Stage Housing**

### **Lectionary Readings for next week:**

(May 14, Sixth Sunday of Easter)

Acts 17:22-31; Psalm 66:8-20; 1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21