

May 26, 2024
Tri-Region Wide Worship Service
“Life Together”

Prelude: **“How Firm a Foundation”** Joseph Funk Arr. Cindy Berry

Land Acknowledgement:

We acknowledge that we worship and reside on the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee and the Anishinaabe peoples. It is in the spirit of reconciliation and right relationships, and working towards building just relationships between all races and nations that we come to worship the One who will empower and guide us with grace.

Welcome:

Welcome, one and all, to this shared service of worship, shared today by congregations across the Antler River Watershed, Horseshoe Falls, and the Western Ontario Waterways Regions. Wherever we are today, we are together in spirit, united by our common faith and shared journey. Today, we celebrate the vibrant diversity of our communities, affirming our commitment to walk this path of faith together. Let us worship God, who calls us into a life of love, peace, grace and community.

Moment of Silence:

Let us take a moment to prepare our hearts and minds for worship by attending to the hope and unity that God offers.

Lighting the Christ Candle:

As we light the Christ candle, let it be a symbol of Christ’s presence among us and within our wider United Church community. May this light shining across our regions remind us of the unity we share in Jesus Christ.

Call to Worship (responsive)

One: In many places, we gather:

All: We are one in spirit.

One: From many backgrounds, we come:

All: We are one in Christ.

One: For many purposes, we serve:

All: We are one in our calling.

One: Together, let us worship God!

All: Who makes us one body, one spirit, in Christ.

Hymn: VU 402 “We Are One”

1 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.

2 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

Opening Prayer:

Gracious God, in your wisdom, you have called us together to reflect the body of Christ. As we gather in your presence, we acknowledge our imperfections and the times we have fallen short of loving as you have taught us. Forgive us for the moments we have acted in isolation rather than seeking the strength of our community. Open our eyes to the beauty of our shared life and strengthen our hearts for the journey we undertake together. Teach us to cherish each other's gifts and to face our challenges with courage and love. As we worship today, knit us closer to one another and to you, mending our spirits and renewing our purpose. In Christ's name, we pray,
Amen

Special Music / Anthem: "Jubilate, Sing to God"

Prayers of the People: (responsive)

One: God of compassion and justice, we lift our prayers to you, knowing you hear the cries of all who are in need. Teach us to see your face in the least of our siblings, as we remember your call to serve them.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

One: For those who hunger in a world of plenty, for children who go to bed without food, and for families who struggle to put a meal on the table, may we be moved to action and compassion.

All: Give us the will to feed the hungry.

One: For those who thirst, those without access to clean water, and for communities ravaged by drought, may we work together to quench their thirst and steward the resources of your creation.

All: Give us the resolve to provide water to the thirsty.

One: For those who lack shelter and those who are displaced from their homes by conflict or disaster, may we open our hearts and our communities to provide refuge and peace.

All: Give us the strength to clothe the naked and shelter the homeless.

One: For those who suffer in isolation—those imprisoned, those who are lonely, and those marginalized by society—may we bring the light of fellowship and care to their lives.

All: Give us the courage to visit and comfort the lonely and imprisoned.

One: For the oppressed, the exploited, and all who struggle for freedom and justice, may we lend our voices and our actions to their cause, reflecting your calls for justice.

All: Give us the determination to support the oppressed.

One: For our own community, that we may recognize the needs around us and respond with love, breaking down the barriers of fear or indifference that separate us.

All: Help us to love one another as you have loved us.

One: God of all, we pray for the church worldwide, that it may be a source of hope and a beacon of your love in the world. Strengthen us to live out the gospel, not just in word, but in deed.

All: Inspire us to act as your hands and feet on Earth.

One: We pray all this in the name of Jesus, who taught us the fullness of love and the power of humble service.

All: Amen.

Life and Work of the Church/Announcements:

Invitation to Offering:

As we gather today across all our regions, we recognize and give thanks for the many ways you contribute to the life and work of the Church. Each act of service, each moment of time, every skill shared, enriches communities and extends good work in the world. Your generosity in spirit and action help to light the path for others, reflecting the love of Christ in countless ways.

We are also deeply grateful for the financial gifts that sustain and empower the wider mission of our church.

Today, as we prepare our offerings, we especially highlight the Mission and Service fund—a vital artery through which the lifeblood of our ministry flows to the far corners of our nation and beyond. This fund supports everything from local food banks and international relief efforts, to schools and micro-loans, to water and health care, embodying our commitment to live out the Gospel.

As we come together in this moment of giving, let us do so with open hearts and hands. May we continue to be generous in all aspects of our lives—giving gratefully of our financial resources, our time, our talents, and our skills. Each contribution, no matter the form it takes, is an essential thread in the fabric of our shared ministry.

Let us give as we have received, abundantly and with joy, knowing that through our combined efforts, we are doing God's work, making a tangible difference in the world. Your generosity not only sustains but also expands the reach of our collective mission—sharing God's love and justice with all.

Offertory Time:

Prayer of Dedication: (together)

Generous God, we offer to you the gifts of our hearts and the resources you have entrusted to us. Bless these offerings, the finances collected here, those given digitally and all other shared resources and talents as a sign of our shared commitment to your work in the world. May they strengthen the church and spread your love and justice near and far. With grateful hearts, we dedicate all gifts to you. Amen.

Hymn: VU 374 Come and Find the Quiet Centre

1. 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

2. 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.

3. 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 Illumination:

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that as the Scriptures are read and your Word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Illuminate our understanding, inspire our thoughts, and draw us closer to you. Amen.

Scripture:

Responsive Psalm 133 - paraphrase by Greg Simpson

One: "How good and pleasant it is when we live together in harmony!"

All (sung response): "How wonderful to live together in unity!"

Leader: "Unity is sacred, anointing us all like the precious oil poured on Aaron's head, flowing abundantly down onto his beard and the collar of his robes."

All (sung response): "How wonderful to live together in unity!"

Leader: "Unity is a source of life and refreshment, like the dew on Mount Hermon and Mount Zion. In our fellowship and collaboration God's blessing flows, perpetual and everlasting."

All (sung response): "How wonderful to live together in unity!"

Ezra 3:1-13:

When the seventh month came, and the Israelites were in the towns, the people gathered together in Jerusalem. Then Jeshua son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel with his kin set out to build the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt-offerings on it, as prescribed in the law of Moses the man of God. They set up the altar on its foundation, because they were in dread of the neighbouring peoples, and they offered burnt-offerings upon it to the Lord, morning and evening. And they kept the festival of booths, as prescribed, and offered the daily burnt-offerings by number according to the ordinance, as required for each day, and after that the regular burnt-offerings, the offerings at the new moon and at all the sacred festivals of the Lord, and the offerings of everyone who made a freewill-offering to the Lord. From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt-offerings to the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid. So they gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the grant that they had from King Cyrus of Persia. In the second year after their arrival at the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak made a beginning, together with the rest of their people, the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity. They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upwards, to have the oversight of the work on the house of the Lord. And Jeshua

with his sons and his kin, and Kadmiel and his sons, Binnui and Hodaviah along with the sons of Henadad, the Levites, their sons and kin, together took charge of the workers in the house of God. When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments were stationed to praise the Lord with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, according to the directions of King David of Israel; and they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, 'For he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever towards Israel.'

And all the people responded with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, old people who had seen the first house on its foundations, wept with a loud voice when they saw this house, though many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted so loudly that the sound was heard far away.

Acts 2:42-47:

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Message: (video) "Life Together"

Hymn: VU 427 To Show by Touch and Word

1. To show by touch and word devotion to the earth,
to hold in full regard all life that comes to birth,
we need, O God, the will to find
the good you had of old in mind.
2. Renew our minds to choose the things that matter most,
our hearts to long for truth till pride of self is lost.
For every challenge that we face
we need your guidance and your grace.
3. Let love from day to day be yardstick, rule, and norm,
and let our lives portray your word in human form.
Now come with us that we may have
your wits about us where we live.

Benediction

Go forth into the world in peace, be of good courage, hold fast to what is good, support one another in faith. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.

Postlude: "Come, Thou Almighty King" Fetice Giardini

Announcements:

Rev. Mark will be away the next two Sundays. May 26 due to the Annual Spring Meeting of Antler River Watershed Regional Council (ARWRC), and June 2 due to Continuing Education. He will be available for pastoral emergencies until (and including) Thursday, May 23.

From May 26 to June 2, please contact Karlene Kimber (the minister at Belmont United Church) for pastoral emergencies. Karlene can be reached at 519-282-3056.

Antler River Watershed Regional Council Annual Spring Meeting runs Friday, May 24 to Sunday, May 26 at the Unifor Family Centre in Port Elgin.

Central Board meets Wednesday, June 19 at 7 p.m.