

SERVICE FOR USE DURING CONFERENCE GATHERING WEEKEND
June 18, 2017

(Many of the elements of this service are the ones that will be used during the Service of Praise at the Conference Gathering held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.)

GATHERING

Music Prelude:

Welcome:

Lighting of Christ Candle:

Call to Worship:

One: The Israelites, the disciples and apostles, the matriarchs and patriarchs of our faith – God called them all,

Left Sanctuary: And the call echoes...

Middle Sanctuary: And the call echoes....

Right Sanctuary: And the call echoes....

One: Young and old, in the diversity of our abilities, sexualities, gender identities, ethnicity and race - God continues to call us,

Left Sanctuary: And the call echoes...

Middle Sanctuary: And the call echoes....

Right Sanctuary: And the call echoes....

One: From those who have come before to those who are yet to come, God's call reverberates through time and space,

Left Sanctuary: And the call echoes...

Middle Sanctuary: And the call echoes....

Right Sanctuary: And the call echoes....

One: God calls us to be the church,

Left Sanctuary: And the call echoes...

Middle Sanctuary: And the call echoes....

Right Sanctuary: And the call echoes....

One: As God's church, together let us worship God.

All: Let us worship God!

Opening Prayer:

One: Creator God, Holy One, thank you for the blessing of this day.

We are grateful for the opportunity to come together as your church to celebrate.

All: May the Spirit of love inspire us this day.

One: Creator God, Holy One, as we enter into this time of celebration and worship, we remember that we are called to be a people of love, justice, reconciliation, and hope -

All: As we have been blessed, may our worship today inspire us to be a blessing for all in need of the healing power of love, justice, reconciliation, and hope in our broken world. Amen.

Hymn: More Voices 115 “Behold Behold I Make All Things New”

Prayer of Confession and Call to Transformation:

Merciful God,

God of wisdom and truth,

You have knit us together in our mothers’ wombs

You know us inside and out,

better than we even know ourselves.

From the dawn of creation,

through the matriarchs and patriarchs

through the poets and the prophets

in creation itself,

Your call has echoed.

We hear it,

on the wind,

on the voice of friends and strangers

in the life of Jesus

in our holy scriptures.

You ask us to be your echo,

to pass on our faith,

the truth that has been known in our souls.

and someday it seems easy,

somedays it feels like the path before us is clear.

And other days, God,

this feels like an impossible task.

What if we get it wrong?

What will others think?

What if we are mocked or scorned?

And so we hold it in,

our lives and words failing to echo your love to the world.

We stay silent when our voices are needed,

because we are afraid, and silence is easier.

Sometimes, we don’t share the love we know in you,

for we fear rejection, or scorn.

Nudge us from our complacency,

give us once again your Spirit of power and love.

**When we have stood still,
Instead of following,
God forgive us,
Silence
God hear our prayer,
And in your mercy answer. Amen.**

Assurance of Forgiveness:

Even as we offer our prayers of confession we are already forgiven.

At the empty tomb,
God declared Life to be stronger than death,
Love to be stronger than Hate.
And we are called into this truth,
into this life of faith.
To be light bearers in the world.
When we would be silent, God gives us our voices once again,
When we would remain still,
God nudges us ever onward.
For God continues to lead us towards Life for all.
For in Jesus Christ we are reconciled back to God,
And nothing can separate us from a Love like that!
Thanks be to God! Amen

Conversation with the Young and Young at Heart:

Supplies Needed: Basin of water (with the largest surface area possible), objects to drop in (stones or pebbles or coins work well).

Begin with demonstration. Drop objects into the water (or have children do this) Make observations, what happens to the ripples when you drop things in the middle? Close to the sides? More than one at a time in different places? Several at a time in one place? Before the ripples have stopped from the last thing? Follow up with a discussion.

Potential discussion: Sometimes it's hard to know if we have heard God speaking to us. How have you heard God speaking? (allow for answers). Sometimes we hear God through other people, has that ever happened to you? (allow for answers).

Sometimes other people hear God through us! When we love as we are taught by Jesus, and tell others about God's love it's like those ripples. We can't always predict them, sometimes they're big and sometimes they're small, and sometimes they meet other ripples and change. Listening to God is kind of like that. It changes us, and we

change others. Sometimes we are like the pebbles being dropped, sometimes we are the sides of the container, sometimes we are the water, and sometimes we are the ripples!

Let's Pray, repeat after me:

Dear God

we thank you for friends and family,
for games and fun
for laughter.

We thank you that you help us to make new friends,
to get closer to new people.

Help us to always share your love with others
to reach out to new people,
to keep making new friends.

We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Hymn: More Voices 176 "Three Things I Promise"

THE WORD

Epistle Reading: 2 Timothy 1:3-7 (NRSV)

I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

Reflection: "The Call Echoes..."

Let us pray,

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts find favor in your sight
O God, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Have you ever stood at the edge of a canyon, and yelled? At the top of your lungs, with everything in you? Just to hear the echo? It's an amazing thing, to hear your own voice bouncing off the walls growing fainter and fainter. It makes us want to think of all kinds of things to yell and shout. Often we start with just a hello. And then as the words echo again and again, it builds. With song lyrics and maybe even a melody. A favorite poem or catch phrase. Words that speak to the wonder in our hearts of the goodness of creation. To the awe that this is even possible. The science behind it, even when we understand it, remains simply awe-inspiring when used in real world applications.

Have you ever been standing at the edge of a canyon and heard a voice from somewhere else? It sends shivers down your back when you can't see the origin, but can hear the words rising up on the wind. Even without being able to pinpoint the exact moment the words began, you feel connected. It makes you want to yell back to see if your words will be heard by the original voice. It makes us want to explore and test the possibilities of connection.

Faith connects us like that. God's call connects us like that. God's call has echoed through the generations, throughout time, and reverberates through us.

Our reading today is part of a longer letter from Paul to Timothy. While scholars are mostly in agreement that it wasn't actually Paul who wrote the letters, they are written in the style of Paul, to lend to them Paul's authority and wisdom. Which was so desperately needed. Paul had gone to Ephesus, he had brought some folks into the faith, preached and taught all about Jesus, and a new church was formed. With things going well, Paul moved on - to another town, to another place, to another new church. Paul had left Ephesus, leaving Timothy behind.

Timothy was to stand in Paul's stead and be the leader for the people, to offer wisdom and guidance, to deal with issues as they arose. In this case, that meant Timothy had to deal with false teachings. To help with knowing who should be trusted to lead. To which laws they would adhere. To try to understand the resurrection and what it meant for the people. To understand the role of women in the new faith moving forward. All huge issues for Timothy to try to deal with. Each one seemingly more complex than the last.

And it wasn't necessarily going all that well. Timothy was struggling. The church was becoming more and more divided, as new issues kept arising. Can you imagine how overwhelmed Timothy felt? To be left with such a huge responsibility? And to have it be falling apart? To feel as though he was failing in his responsibilities? In his ministry?

And so Paul sent a letter. The letter was intended to offer some wisdom and guidance to Timothy, and through him the wider church. It was intended to help settle some issues, and answer the questions that were lingering.

It didn't fix everything.

When that failed to fix everything, and Paul, feeling he was nearing the end of his ministry, sent another letter. This is the letter our reading comes from. A letter to Timothy passing on wisdom and insight to the next generation. It is a letter to encourage Timothy, a "you can do this" kind of letter. It's like the speech a coach gives a team when they're behind, nearing the end of the big game. It's the letter to rally the

leadership, to remind them that they're capable. To step up. To be brave. To be themselves. To proclaim the Gospel and truth. To not hide. For Timothy; Timothy was on the verge of hiding. With fear and uncertainty bombarding him, Timothy was searching for someone else to take this on, to be the one everyone was looking to for answers.

Haven't we all been there at some point? Stood there and wondered, "Surely there is someone more qualified than I? More capable? Better trained? Better equipped? Someone who actually KNOWS what they're supposed to be doing?"

It seems like there's a moment for everyone when adulthood just hits. When you're in a room pondering a situation that has arisen, and you're looking at the conflict, the kids, the mess, the confusion, and you look around for the adult, for the leader, when all of the sudden, you realize, the adult is you. The leader is you. And you can feel yourself recoil, "No that can't be the case, surely there is someone else? More qualified? An adultier adult? Someone else with the knowledge and experience to deal with this?"

We all have these moments both big and small. The first time you drove a car, or when you were the one to cook the big family meal for the first time. The first time you changed a diaper, or heard your child cry in the middle of the night, and knew you were supposed to help the tiny person. The first time you took the lead on a new project or group at work. Moments big and small, when suddenly you were hit with the responsibility of what you were doing, and turned to look, to see who else you could possibly turn it over to, for surely there was someone, anyone, else?

We have these very same moments in our faith lives. The first time you stand up to read scripture in church, or offer the reflection. When you're asked to be on a committee, or even chair one. When you're asked to teach Sunday school, or run the youth group, or Vacation Bible School, or the Fall Supper. We are a group of leaders of the church, in search of another, more leader-like leader to lead.

Some days when we look at the world around us, when we listen to or read the news, all we want to do is shut it off, to tune it out. For the problems all seem too large to comprehend.

Wars and threats of war.

Decades old conflicts.

Famine and starvation.

Hate. Racism and Bigotry.

Poverty on the streets of our own towns and cities.

Inequality.

And on smaller scales, in our own neighbourhoods and churches, conflict and those being excluded or ignored. There are arguments over who is right and who is wrong and what is allowed to happen and what isn't. Whose turn it is to use the kitchen, and who needs to ask permission from 14 other groups before they get their turn.

And we worry and we wonder. Who is going to deal with this? Who is going to fix this? How can this gap possibly be bridged? For we know in our hearts the work that needs to be done. The faith that has been passed down for generations nudges us from within. We can feel the need. We know something isn't right, and something should be done. And yet, we are equally sure we are not the one to do it. And so we look around for someone else.

Suddenly we are just like Timothy, longing for someone else to come and tell us what to do. Someone else to be the voice of wisdom in the room. And so we sit back, we consider hiding. We remain silent. We let the fear and the "what-ifs" hold us back. We are timid and scared and searching all around the room, searching for the last place the echo bounced off of, for the source of the echo, the one who called in the first place, who threw the first stone in the water to create the first ripple. It's thousands of years later, and yet in some ways we are just like Timothy. And like Timothy, it is here that the writer's advice arrives, precisely when it is most needed.

God's Spirit is given to you. A Spirit of power and boldness. A Spirit of love. This Spirit resides in you. Timothy is reminded that he already possesses all the gifts he needs. The Holy Spirit that was given at Pentecost has been given to even him. He was reminded that he was far more capable than he ever imagined.

The faith of the generations before him had been passed down to him. The faith of generations past, now resided in him. He was fully equipped with all that he needed.

When Timothy started to wonder if he could do anything about all the issues arising, he was reminded that God's gift to him was a Spirit of power, and love, and boldness. A Spirit that would see him through. That would enable him to do the work most needed, "You," he was reminded, "are ready." God gives you all the boldness, all the love, all the self-discipline you'll need. God will work through you. You too can be an echo.

This same Spirit has been gifted to us too. God will work through us, yes all of us, for God equips the called. The Holy Spirit resides upon the Creator's own people. It is likely we will never know all the ripples we create, and that's okay. At the right time

and place, the right person will be there, all we need to do is allow the Spirit to move within us.

A few years into ministry in my first charge I was catching up with my mother on the phone. The usual chitchat, including what I was working on that week. I told her I had a funeral, and she, having grown up in the area, asked who it was for. So I told her, Helen Scott. In a stunned voice she repeated the name, Helen Scott, over and over. As Helen had spent her last few years in a care home away from the area, I had never met her. So the name had not meant anything to me. It did to my mum. Helen had taught my mother Sunday School for years when she was growing up. Helen was one of those women who had laid the foundation of faith for my mother and countless other children. A faithful woman in a small community church, doing what she could. And her efforts were part of the reason why when my mum grew up and had children of her own she took them to church. We may not have attended every week, but it was enough to spark my own life of faith. A life of faith that would eventually lead to my hearing a call into Ordained ministry. A vocation that might never have been realised without the quiet dedication of a woman named Helen Scott. A woman who I never met in life, but whose own faith irrevocably changed my own.

The call echoes.

The faith we know and rely on, the faith we struggle with and against, the faith that pushes and prods us, is a gift from the previous generations. Is a gift from our God. We are a part of the echo of that ancient call.

The call that stirred the waters of creation, the call echoed by poets and psalmists, that was proclaimed boldly by prophets, that was lived by daring men and women of faith. The call made manifest in the life and teachings, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The call that saw the gifting of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. With the power of Christ within us, nothing is impossible.

The call echoes.

Today in Saskatchewan we mark the new stage of ministry for three people: Roy, Koshy, and Jason as they move into new ways of living out their call. We celebrate the retirement of several ministers and offer thanks for their service to God's church. And as we do these things, we acknowledge that we may never know all the lives that have been touched by the ministry offered, nor all the lives that will be touched in the future. God's Spirit is in them. And it resides in us, in this place, a Spirit of power, boldness, and love. We do not know all the ripples, how the echo of God's call will continue to bounce and affect future generations. So we hear and respond, with our lives, our

words, and our deeds. Reflecting back into the world the love and boldness we know in Christ.

For God's call cannot be contained. It cannot be called back. It just keeps going, as new sounds join the mix, the melody and harmony of countless generations sharing their faith too.

We are invited to be those people who stand on the edge of life's canyon, who yell into space. Those who live and love outloud. And listen as it reverberates off the walls and joins with countless other voices in harmony and wonder. For God's Spirit is in us, a spirit of power and love. And that call never ends. Thanks be to God. Amen

THE RESPONSE

Hymn: More Voices 157 "I Am a Child of God" (vs 1-5,1)

Offering:

Let us make our offerings to God.
As God has been generous and gracious in gifts to us,
Let us also be generous and gracious in gifts for the work of God's church.
Let us receive the offering.

The Gifts For and Of God Are Gathered:

Dedication of Offering:

**In love and joy we present our gifts and we present ourselves that
the work of the church may be done.**

Hymn: More Voices 161 "I Have Called You by Your Name."

Prayers of the People:

Gracious God,
whose love knows no bounds
whose call has been heard through the ages
and echoes anew in each generation.
We bring to you our prayers; those we speak aloud as well as the unspoken prayers of
our hearts.

We pray especially for our brothers and sisters around the world,
those of your children living under oppression.
Our fellow Christians persecuted for their faith.

Those who know what it is to live without:
 without security
 without freedom from fear
 without the hope of a better tomorrow.

Those whose relationship with their government is one of fear and struggle.
 We hold them in our hearts and pray that they might know the safety of your love to feel
 the wholeness of your loving embrace.
 Hear our prayer O God.

We pray for our leaders.
 Those of our communities and nations and our church.
 As they face decisions made in the past,
 and seek to guide your people to a better envisioned future.
 We hold them in our hearts
 and pray that they might know the passion of your love:
 to lead with prophetic voices for our future.
 Hear our prayer O God

We pray for our neighbors.
 Those who are near to us and those further away.
 As our friends and families face new joys and new sorrows,
 new uncertainties, new hopes.
 As they begin new adventures and try to heal old wounds.
 Loving God, help them to know
 that in their brokenness and their blessings they are your beloved,
 and a beloved part of this family.

We lift up these prayers and the silent prayers of our hearts.

Silence

We pray these things in the name of your son, Jesus the Christ who taught us to pray
 together saying,

**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 the glory are yours
 now and forever.**

Closing Hymn: Voices United 509 "I, The Lord of Sea and Sky"

Commissioning and Blessing:

And now we move into God's world,
to continue the work of Christ,
to the places we are called.
Having been loved into being by our Creator

We go forth echoing that love.

Having received Grace from our brother Jesus Christ,

We go forth echoing that grace.

Knowing we are held and sustained by the Holy Spirit,

We go forth echoing care and compassion to those most vulnerable

So let us go forth with a daring and courageous love
The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the communion of the Holy
Spirit be with you today and forever more. Amen.

Musical Postlude

***This service and message was prepared by Krystal Sheremeta, President of
Conference. Work on the liturgy for the Service of Praise also included
Conference Personnel Minister Liz Mackenzie, President-Elect Bonnie Morton,
and Brenda Curtis.***

***The hymns are taken from More Voices and Voices United but substitutions may
be made depending on the resources of the community.***