

Sunday, June 6th, 2021

God's Family of Faith - Regional Council Sunday - A Recipe for Unity

This Service Liturgy comes from the creative and adaptive work of the people of:

St. Andrews Anglican Church (Humboldt)

Quill Plains Pastoral Charge (Watson/Quill Lake)

Westminster United Church (Humboldt)

Music offered by Westminster Music Team

...with welcome:

Welcome to our service for the Living Skies Regional Council brought to you by the faith communities of St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Quill Plains United Church Pastoral Charge and Westminster United Church.

Today's service is called *God's Family of Faith-* and is inspired by the Prairie Center for Ecumenism *Recipe for Unity*.

As we enter into our time of worship we begin with 2 opening songs. But before we sing, let us take a brief moment of quiet and a deep breath as we center ourselves for worship in the presence of God ...

...with prelude Music

I Heard the Voice of Jesus <https://youtu.be/WJV2EM11dMw>

Dance with the Spirit <https://youtu.be/x0kusqz9q5g>

GATHERING IN THE SPIRIT...

...with territory acknowledgement

For thousands of years Indigenous peoples have walked on this land, in their own country. Their relationship with the land is at the center of their lives. As we open our worship service today, we acknowledge that we are gathered in the homeland of the Metis and the traditional territory of the Cree, Salteaux, and Assiniboine First Nations - in the area most recently defined as Treaty 6, and we acknowledge their stewardship of this land throughout the ages....

...with The New Creed

We are not alone,
we live in God's world.
We believe in God:

who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus,
the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:

to celebrate God's presence,
to live with respect in Creation,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus,
crucified and risen,
our judge and our hope.

In life, in death,
in life beyond death,

God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

...with lighting the Christ Candle

Like a star in the night sky; like a beacon in the midst of a storm.

Christ's light shines in our midst, now and forever. Thanks be to God!

...with call to worship

God is our vision lighting our path

God is our wisdom guiding our plans

God is our grace awakening our spirits

With arms wide open and hearts ready to receive the gift of the Spirit, let us
come together now in this time of worship

...with opening prayer

Let us pray...God, your light shines in the most surprising places; places where your Spirit is already at work. You invite us to build your kin-dom and you encourage us to risk and put ourselves to the task of celebrating our diversity while discovering our unity. Lead us from places of stagnation and loss to places of purpose and new life. As your stirring winds blew across the waters of creation, blow through us and lead to be the One Body of Christ at work in your world. Amen.

...with opening hymn Come Touch our Hearts <https://youtu.be/g2d4tjAlYRc>

SHARING THE WORD

...with words for illumination

May the Spirit bring light to these words as they are spoken and encouragement to our hearts as they are heard...

...with scripture readings

In our Hebrew Scripture reading, a people restricted and limited by a sense of scarcity are given direction and guidance to bring them into God's blessing of abundance.

Haggai 2: 15-19 (From this day on I will bless you)

15 “Now give careful thought to this from this day on[b]—consider how things were before one stone was laid on another in the Lord’s temple. 16 When anyone came to a heap of twenty measures, there were only ten. When anyone went to a wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were only twenty. 17 I struck all the work of your hands with blight, mildew and hail, yet you did not return to me,’ declares the Lord. 18 ‘From this day on, from this twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, give careful thought to the day when the foundation of the Lord’s temple was laid. Give careful thought: 19 Is there yet any seed left in the barn? Until now, the vine and the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree have not borne fruit. “‘From this day on I will bless you.’”

As the new church emerged, there were many divisions to bridge, significant issues to settle and underlying differences to sort out. In our next reading, which is part of a larger reading on the use of God's gifts, Paul uses the analogy of a human body to show the faithful how diversity can work together for a greater good.

1 Corinthians 12: 12-13 (One body with many members)

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Our reading today from the gospel of Mark is part of a larger narrative which is often seen as the mission of this gospel because here Jesus is redrawing the lines of family to include all people who follow in God's way. Creating a larger circle of what family is indicates Jesus' willingness to disrupt our human constructs and

boundaries for the sake of God's kin-dom. It is another example of how God's spirit leads in ways that are subversive to human expectations and outcomes.

Mark 3:31-35 (Kindred in Christ)

31 Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters[a] are outside, asking for you." 33 And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34 And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

Hymn: Who Is My Mother?

<https://youtu.be/qsItX4Eui-I>

...through reflections

As part of the whole people of God that reaches beyond boundaries and barriers, we have asked people from each of the 3 faith communities which partner together in a variety of ways (St. Andrew's Anglican; Quill Plains Pastoral Charge and Westminster United) to offer a brief reflection of their experience.

In the midst of COVID we are not the communities we once were and we don't know who we will be when the pandemic ends, and so you will hear lament and grief as well as hope and aspiration. Our prayer is that you will relate and connect to what is being shared and join us in what is being hoped and dreamed for....

St. Andrew's Anglican Church/Humboldt: In our first reading today, the prophet Haggai asks the Judean peoples to think back to the days before the temple was built. Before the temple was built, the land, it seems, was less prosperous. If you want 20 measures of wheat you would only find 10. If you tried to draw 50 measures of wine, you would only find 20. After the temple was built, things were better. The land of Israel was abundant with food.

For Haggai and the Judeans that temple represents the presence of God. The presences of God in their lives comes with a better quality of life. I have found the same thing in my life. Knowing that God is present in my life, knowing that God is with through all the highs and lows, through the good and the bad, trusting that God is bringing me to a better tomorrow, gives me hope. It changes my perspective. My focus changes from the all the bad things I see on social media to the good I see in real life. There is a lot of good being done in our community of

Humboldt. From phoning our loved ones to check on them to giving to the Soup Kitchen and the Food Bank, people have opened up their lives to others.

This is something the temple also represents for Haggai and the Judeans. The temple is the place for people to gather with God. At St. Andrew's and Westminster, our in-person church activities have moved to the virtual. Not gathering in a church building as once did hasn't stopped the community from being a church. The temple and the church are physical buildings, but they are also the people that gather. We bring the church into our homes when we pray with our family. We bring the church into the street when we say a kind word to someone we meet. These are simple actions, simple words, but they create a space in which the presence of God and the goodness of God becomes tangible for everyone.

Westminster United Church/Humboldt: In the April newsletter from the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism, an article, specific for congregations of different denominations, included a recipe for unity. I would like to expand on this article and add a few more ingredients. Let's say two churches (or more) would like to share their resources of space, time and energy. When I say energy, I mean the valuable mental and

physical energy of clergy, volunteers and of people in the congregation. This energy can run thin at the best of times. When enthusiasm wanes, often the result is negativity and lethargy. We cannot let this happen. It is important we nurture our people. Collaboration with another church community can be invigorating.

Since each church family has its own personality and culture, working together is not always easy. The chance for a long lasting friendship is greater if we have a sincere willingness and desire to cooperate. It is important we understand and respect our differences and not push ones set of beliefs over another.

The original recipe for unity consists of six ingredients.

- two or more congregations or parishes
- an openness of mind and heart
- generosity of spirit
- an interest in other human beings, their beliefs and traditions
- willingness to take time to visit
- desire to make God smile.

Of these six ingredients the two most vital, in my opinion, is generosity of spirit and an openness of mind and heart. These can be nurtured by performing the following actions: visit, listen, tell our stories, pray, celebrate and work together. Eventually — hopefully — committing to an act of holy friendship. Covenant.

Granted, these actions are difficult to perform during this time of pandemic. This time apart has been longer than we thought. We all have made so many sacrifices. Some of us, the ultimate sacrifice of losing someone we love. We need to forgive ourselves and forgive others.

With an openness of mind and heart, with a generosity of spirit, we will visit, listen, tell our stories, and pray.

I am optimistic the end of the pandemic is near, on the horizon, just a little beyond our reach, but soon. "Soon" being a rather nebulous word.

Patience is a the seventh ingredient I would add to the recipe. When it is safe, we can extend our hand, literally, in friendship with another church community. Nothing says fellowship like breaking bread and praying together. We are all a little more agreeable when our hunger is satisfied and the communal potluck is a perennial church favourite.

After we listen and talk, after a few more potlucks, after we come to understand our motivations and fears, open our hearts and embrace our differences, find commonalities, we could work on a shared project.

"Soon" we can celebrate our mutual holy days, and learn more about "other" ways to worship and show our love for God. Soon we can hug, shake hands, laugh. Sing. A sense of humour, humility and grace would be a good seasonings for this recipe.

Patience, my friends. All of this takes time.

Quill Plains United Church Pastoral Charge: Quill Plains Pastoral Charge consists of two points, Trinity United in Watson and Wesley United in Quill Lake. Each of the points is small. We know that most of our members would not regularly attend church without there being local church services. By combining together, we have managed to continue providing alternating church services in our communities during most of the year. We feel blessed to have been able to contract part time ministry services from Westminster United in Humboldt. The contracted ministry along with local area lay ministry have provided Quill Plains with a wonderful variety of church services and other ministry services.

We have asked our members at Trinity to make some comments about the joys we have experienced being together with other faith communities. Here are their replies as well as their concerns and hopes for the future...

The variety of church services we have had is a welcome change especially when we can have access to other ministers - ordained and lay. Togetherness is the key.

Our dreams and visions for the future - to be a larger group, return to our coffee times, discussions and potlucks.

Now we are being called to reach out and bring more to our church. With the unrest and uncertainty in the world, we need to try to help others beyond our own church community.

Fellowship over coffee after church is how we learn from others. We want to have more people interested in helping out with our church ministry.

We want to be able to go to a service, or to a funeral, a potluck, a tea and bake sale, a discussion group - in person. We want more actual contact with other faith communities - right now we are missing the smiles.

It is important to be a Christian presence in our community and join with other faith groups to do this. The wider church community supports us at Trinity especially during Covid restrictions. We had access to online services and resources which allowed us to keep functioning and help navigate these trying times. The support and encouragement from our minister allows us to have an active

faith community. We may not have had these opportunities if we did not work together with other faith communities.

I think one of the best parts of being a larger church family is what we can learn from one another. We can share different ways of looking at issues and concerns, as well as joys and sorrows. We can find new ways to make each other and God laugh. I particularly like that in the recipe for unity, because especially during these difficult times we need laughter and joy.

With our dwindling numbers in rural Saskatchewan, it's more important than ever to share resources. Our agreement with Westminster to have Rev. Brenda is so very important to us, however we are very lucky to have the talent of lay people to share their ministry with us as well. In the past we have brought the larger faith community together through a Blanket Exercise, video discussions, guest musicians, joint choirs, Christmas potlucks including other denominations, coffee discussions, joint presentations which have provided us with a richer way of being a Christian community. Hopefully we can continue to do these after Covid -19 is a distant memory.

Our sister church in Quill Lake - Wesley United had the following Comments...

We always dream that our United Church will be able to keep going and

always be a place to get together to worship and get away from everyday concerns knowing we have a back-up from others. I think our church is called to be a welcoming place for people to be accepted. Of course prior to Covid, we were able to do more with other faith groups by sharing resources, having meaningful discussions and learning from one another. Now we have concerns that I'm sure many others share. Our attendance is down and we wonder if people will return to church once restrictions are lifted. At present we are somewhat isolated except through our Sunday Service and on-line communications which a lot of aging church members don't have access to, so we continue to reach out, to phone others to stay in contact and remind them they are a very important part of our church family. Our hope for the future: to return to what we had prior to the pandemic, to be able to meet together, to sit face to face with other faith communities, and discuss and share concerns and joys and be stronger together.

Westminster United Church/Humboldt: My name is Allison Sarauer, part of the Westminster Affirm Team that is currently on the path towards becoming an Affirming Community of Faith.

Our Affirm group is privileged to engage with many "branches on the vine", "parts of the body" "ingredients in the recipe" as we take this journey of education and discernment towards becoming fully inclusive, welcoming and respectful of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Our work has been supported by clergy from Saskatoon, colleagues in the Living Skies Regional Council, and the national Affirm United staff and membership. Ideas, resources, and knowledge are shared, and encouragement is offered. Locally, we are really fortunate to be connected with the Humboldt & Area Pride Network where we participate back-and-forth in activities, workshops, and celebrations. We walked with a young member through the struggles and formation of the Humboldt Highschool GSA club.

Westminster's connection with Rev. Matteo and St. Andrew's Anglican Church through events, worship and our Affirming process is one more way that we collaborate and learn, with the support and interest of their community.

In 2021, our Westminster Affirm Team heard the call from the national church to begin the monumental task of becoming an anti-racist church.....and we clearly recognize the intersection with the process of becoming Affirming. Many concerns and issues facing gender and sexual diverse folks echo those of marginalized black, indigenous, and other people of colour.

At a workshop with Rev. Jordan Cantwell and Rev. Keith Hall in January, we began to understand that when we expand our LOVE, INCLUSION and ACCEPTANCE to "others", our community of faith WILL change. We need to prepare for change if we are committed to inclusion and diversity. We personally, and our Communities of Faith, must continue to strive to become the people God would have us be. Through working with and honouring people who don't look like us.... love like us.... or have the same history or theology as we do, our call to "love on another as I have loved you" will become more challenging and almost certainly a bit more uncomfortable. Distancing ourselves and judging others are easy. Love and inclusion and acceptance, that's the hard work....but we are called....called to LOVE, to love EVERYONE.

All of gathered here are so blessed to have each other, so many connections, so many branches on the vine and parts of the body. By working, and loving, growing, and praying together we will create ways to celebrate God's love, and live in harmony in this wonderful world.

Let us end our reflections today with this embodied vision of what unity looks like; this from the Book of Psalms ...

Psalm 133 (The Blessedness of Unity)

*1 How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in unity!*
*2 It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down upon the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down over the collar of his robes.*
*3 It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion.*
*For there the Lord ordained his blessing,
life forevermore.*

GIVING THANKS IN THE SPIRIT

...through hymn *My Love Colors Outside the Lines*
https://youtu.be/XIqYS7ADu_A

...through *Minute for Mission*
Mambud's Story <https://youtu.be/PL6CI5zPkLA>

...through offering our gifts, talents and lives to God

As we respond to God's goodness and grace in our lives, let us take a moment of quiet to visualize the bringing forward of our gifts of time, talent and treasure. What have we offered to God in gratitude and thankfulness this week?

...through hymn of dedication

I Thank you, Thank you Jesus <https://youtu.be/NgMVXSpkebI>

...through prayer of dedication

Out of your generous heart, O God, we have been blessed in so many ways. Reveal to us now what it is that we can offer in return. And as we continue to learn what it means to live as your people and as stewards of your abundant grace, bless what we give of ourselves this day and remind us that whatever we offer, you will use to bring justice and compassion into the world. Amen.

...through prayers of the people/community

In joy and hope let us pray to the source of all life, saying, "Hear us, Lord of glory!"

That our risen Saviour may fill us with the joy of his holy and life-giving resurrection, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That isolated and persecuted churches may find fresh strength in the Easter gospel, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That he may grant us humility to be subject to one another in Christian love, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That he may provide for those who lack food, work, or shelter, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That by his power wars and famine may cease through all the earth, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That he may reveal the light of his presence to the sick, the weak, and the dying, that they may be comforted and strengthened, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

...through The Lord's Prayer

If you have someone in your congregation who can speak the Lord's prayer in another language, please consider doing this. On the video version of this service Yoonjin Park Bott shared it in her native language of Korean.

...through closing hymn Draw the Circle Wide <https://youtu.be/Sm7qCVCiRII>

RETURNING TO THE WORLD

...with benediction

We are God's beloved servants gifted with dreams and visions. Upon us rests the abundance of God's grace, like flames of a fire. In a spirit of diversity we celebrate our uniqueness in the One Body of Christ. In a spirit of unity we take up our responsibility to love and care for one another.

...with blessing

Let us go to love and serve the Lord in the strength of our collective faith. And as we do may the peace of Christ be with us, the strong arms of God sustain us and may the power of the Holy Spirit strengthen us in every way for this journey we share and for the work we are called to do. Amen

...with Postlude Travel On, Travel On <https://youtu.be/zdWvoOgs6nM>

Thank you !!! for joining us on the journey and for sharing this worship service with others!

Resources used for our service have been adapted from:

*Prairie Center for Ecumenism
Anglican Book of Common Prayer
Seasons of the Spirit Fusion Materials
ONE License for music copywrite*

Links for the performed and license approved music in this service can be found on Westminster United Church Humboldt Utube channel