

Sunday 17 May 2020 – Easter 6



Land Acknowledgement

We gather here mindful of the many who, for millennia, have called this valley home or depended on its trails for safe passage. We know this community as Fernie; it is also the unceded territory of the Ktunaxa people. May we be good and gracious guests of this corner of Creation.

Lighting the Christ Candle

As the days lengthen and the shadows recede, may the light of this candle chase away the darkness. May this light remind us of who we are and whose we are during this season of Easter and always. AMEN

Andrea Brennan, Fernie, BC

Call to Worship

From Gathering

ONE: On this Sunday, we come united by our faith
and our courage to proclaim the Good News!

ALL: We come to celebrate with family and friends
from near and far.

We come to witness to the gospel of love
that is so near and dear to our very being.

ONE: And so, we come worshipping, singing,
and praying.

Jim McKean, Severn Bridge, ON

Opening Prayer

COVID-19 Prayer from Moderator Richard Bott

In this time of COVID-19, we pray:
When we aren't sure, God, help us be calm;
when information comes from all sides, correct and not,
help us to discern;
when fear makes it hard to breathe,
and anxiety seems to be the order of the day,
slow us down, God;
help us to reach out with our hearts,
when we can't touch with our hands;
help us to be socially connected,
when we have to be socially distant;
help us to love as perfectly as we can,
knowing that "perfect love casts out all fear."
For the doctors, we pray,
for the nurses, we pray,
for the technicians and the janitors and the aides and the caregivers,
we pray,
for the researchers and theorists, the epidemiologists and
investigators,
for those who are sick, and those who are grieving, we pray,
for all who are affected, all around the world...
we pray for safety, for health, for wholeness.
May we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty,
clothe the naked and house those without homes;
may we walk with those who feel they are alone,
and may we do all that we can to heal
the sick—
in spite of the epidemic, in spite of the fear.
Help us, O God, that we might help each other.
In the love of the Creator,
in the name of the Healer,
in the life of the Holy Spirit that is in all and with all, we pray.
May it be so.

Right Rev. Richard Bott, Moderator of the United Church of Canada

VU 217 – All Creatures of our God and King v.1-2

All crea-tures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing:
Hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu-jah!
Bright burn-ing sun with gold-en beam,
soft shin-ing moon with sil-ver gleam,
sing prais-es, sing prais-ses,
hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu-jah!

O rush-ing winds and breez-es soft,
O cloud that ride the winds a-loft,
sing praise-es, hal-le-lu-jah!
O ris-ing morn, in praside re-joice;
O lights of even-ing, find a voice:
sing prais-es, sing prais-es,
hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu-jah!

Prayer of Illumination

Rebellious God, recruit us.
Give us the courage to face those whose
comfort rests on the bent and hurting backs
of those who are oppressed...even if
we face a mirror to do it.

Anna Atkinson, Nanaimo, BC

Reader: Sandra Barrett

READINGS FOR THE DAY

The Proclamation of the Word

Acts 17.22-31

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we too are his offspring."

Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.'

Psalm 66.8-20

Bless our God, O peoples,
let the sound of his praise be heard,
who has kept us among the living,
and has not let our feet slip.
For you, O God, have tested us;
you have tried us as silver is tried.
You brought us into the net;
you laid burdens on our backs;
you let people ride over our heads;
we went through fire and through water;
yet you have brought us out to a spacious place.

I will come into your house with burnt-offerings;
I will pay you my vows,
those that my lips uttered
and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
I will offer to you burnt-offerings of fatlings,
with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;
I will make an offering of bulls and goats.

Come and hear, all you who fear God,
and I will tell what he has done for me.
I cried aloud to him,
and he was extolled with my tongue.
If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.
But truly God has listened;
he has given heed to the words of my prayer.

Blessed be God,
because he has not rejected my prayer
or removed his steadfast love from me.

1 Peter 3.13-22

Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

John 14.15-21

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.'

HYMN – VU 226 For the Beauty of the Earth v.1,4 - Tune 81

For the beau-ty of the earth,
for the glo-ry of the skies
for the love which from our birth
over and a-round us lies,
God of all, to you we raise,
this our hymns of grate-ful praise.

For each per-fect gift sub-lime
to our race so free-ly given,
gra-ces hu-man and di-vine,
flowers of all gen-tle thoughts and mild,
God of all, to you we raise,
this our hymns of grate-ful praise.

Sermon: The Reverend Andrea L. Brennan
Just Wait...

WE RESPOND IN GIVING AND GRATITUDE

Our Church Tithes and Offerings

Call to Offering

from Gathering

As gifts of time and talent are dedicated,
our spirits rise to fresh opportunity.
As gifts of money are offered,
our spirits raise to strengthen the faith community.
As we remember the risen Christ,
our spirits rise to work out our destiny
as Christians.
As we ask your blessing on our offering,
Gracious God,
our thanksgiving rises in the name of Jesus,
the Holy One. Amen

David Sparks, Okanagan Falls, BC

Words of Assurance

ONE: Remember! Once we were not a people,
ALL: But now we are God's people.
ONE: Remember! Once we had not received mercy,
ALL: But now we have received mercy.
ONE: For this, let us give thanks to God. Amen

Hymn of Thanksgiving

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
Praise God all creatures high and low
Give thanks to God in love made known
Creator, Word and Spirit one!

A 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.

Prayers of the People

Petition and **Response:**

God, as we fear – **Open our hearts to love**

God of love and mercy, be with us as we gather in these uncertain times. Calm our minds, give us the deep peace we seek as we yearn to know you. God, as we fear – **Open our hearts to love.**

Bless all those front line workers; hospital, health unit, police, ambulance and EMT's; grocery clerks, pharmacists and their assistants who are testing their own health that they may keep us safe, fed and supported. God, as we fear – **Open our hearts to love.**

Bless all those in the Elk Valley who care for our corner of creation. For our Mayor, Ange; our Premier, John; and our Prime Minister, Justin. For Adrian Dix and Dr. Bonnie Henry. God, as we fear – **Open our hearts to love.**

Bless all those who lead us in small and large ways. For our Conference Minister Kathy, our Regional Minister Treena, and for our Moderator, Richard. For our Bishop Lynne, our Regional Dean Yme, and for our Primate, Linda. For the Pacific Mountain Region, for the United Church of Canada. For the Diocese of Kootenay, for the Anglican Church of Canada. God, as we fear – **Open our hearts to love.**

We lift up to you the people of Living Spirit United Church. Back in mid-March, as we were moving to shuttering Churches, a small gathering of 41 inadvertently infected 24 people with COVID-19. Four were hospitalised and 2 died. Holy One, be with those who grieve and mourn. Bless those who are blaming themselves. May they see you reflected in everyone they encounter. Be the balm and comfort to the entire community. God, as we fear – **Open our hearts to love.**

We lift up to you the United Church Communities of Saskatoon who were recently vandalized with homophobic hate speech. Be with them as they erase the physical damage. Help heal their spiritual damage. Be their strength as they walk through this difficult time, knowing they are held in your love and supported by their communities in Saskatoon, across Canada in in the world. God, as we fear – **Open our hearts to love.**

Bless and protect those who are on our hearts today.
Who's names we offer to you silently or aloud --

PAUSE

God, as we fear – **Open our hearts to love.**

Be with those who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and are separated from their families. We give thanks for those who have recovered from the virus. We pray that for those whom cure is not possible, that their death may be merciful, swift and gentle.

God, as we fear – **Open our hearts to love.**

God of Mercy be with those who will die this day. Draw them into your arms and let them know they have found a home with you.

God, as we fear – **Open our hearts to love.**

**Joining our prayers and praises together,
Let us pray in the way our Saviour taught us.**

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed by thy name,
thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation
For thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory,
For ever and ever. AMEN

VU 333 – Love Divine, All Loves Excelling v.1,3

Love di-vine, all loves ex-cel-ling,
joy of heaven to earth come down,
fix in us thy hum-ble dwelling,
all thy faith-ful mercies crown.
Je-sus, thou art all com-pas-sion,
pure, un-bound-ed love though art;
vis-it us with thy sal-va-tion,
en-ter ev-ery trem-bling heart.

Fin-ish, then, thy new cre-a-tion;
pure and spot-less let us be;
let us see thy great sal-va-tion
per-fect-ly re-stored in thee,
changed from glo-ry in-to glo-ry,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns be-fore thee,
lost in won-der, love and praise.

MINUTE FOR MISSION – Mary Elson Wampum-Neechi Program

Commissioning

From Gathering

ONE: Travel the road of life with love.
ALL: We will journey the paths of God.
ONE: Travel the road of life with faith.
ALL: We will journey with the risen Christ.
ONE: Travel the road of life with hope.
ALL: We will follow the Holy Spirit,
where it may lead us.

Diane Bennett-Jones, Scarborough, ON

Extinguishing the Christ Candle

As we prepare to continue with our day
we extinguish our candles, knowing
we will be together again, soon.

SENDING HYMN – MV90 Don't Be Afraid

Don't be afraid. My love is stronger,
my love is stronger than your fear.
Don't be afraid. My love is stronger,
and I have promised, promised to be always near.

Credits: The liturgy today has been compiled with resources from Gathering: Lent to Easter, Year A – 2020, Voices United and More Voices. Candle lighting Liturgy written by Reverend Andrea Brennan.