



Tri-Church Summer Worship

Lakeview, Sunset & Wesley United Churches

5th Sunday after Pentecost – July 5th, 2020

Minister: Rev. Tricia Gerhard

Children & Youth Minister: Michelle McConkey

Pianist: Shirley Hill

WE GATHER

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

Centering Music

Lighting the Christ Candle

This candle dances with the presence of the Spirit,
Reminding us of the warmth of community,
Three churches gathered as one.

As this joint community
We affirm that God calls us to gather,
And as the flame of wisdom,
Insight and divine love flickers,
We worship the One who gathers us.

Hymn: MV#61 I Praise You, O God

I praise you, O God, with all my heart
With all the earth I will sing your praises

Words and music: David Robertson, after Psalm 138:1

Call to Worship:

To share in laughter, to pray and sing together,
Even though separated,
To cry, to breathe, to move, to be!

**The gift of incarnation,
Our bodies, tangible, real and free!**

To feel Jesus carrying our burdens,
To love even as we are loved,
To know that our yoke is easy,
Our burden is light,

**Because it is love shared,
Shared with Christ,
Shared with others,
And shared within community.**

This is God's gift, that we might be all that we are.

**So, let us celebrate God,
With heart, body, mind and soul!
Alleluia!**

Prayer adapted from one written by Richard Bott, Vancouver, BC
Gathering: Pentecost 1 2020 (Year A) page 34
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Opening Prayer

Holy One,
Embodied by those gathered
In community today,
Here we are.

Here we are,

**Ready to celebrate this day!
Open our minds to possibility.
Open our hearts to love freely.
Open our hands to each other.
Work through us, in us, and amongst us,
We pray. Amen.**

Prayer adapted from one written by Jamie Miller, Dryden Ontario.
Gathering: Pentecost 1 2020 (year A) page 38
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Hymn: VU#395 Come In, Come In and Sit Down

Refrain

Come in, come in and sit down,
You are a part of the family.
We are lost and we are found,
And we are a part of the family.

You know the reason why you came,
Yet no reason can explain,
So share in the laughter and cry in the pain,
For we are a part of the family.

God is with us in this place
Like a mother's warm embrace.
We're all forgiven by God's grace
For we are a part of the family.

There's rest for the weary and health for us all;
there's a yoke that is easy and a burden that's small.
So come in and worship and answer the call,
For we are a part of the family.

Words: James K. Manley 1984, alt.
Music: James K. Manley, 1984; arr. Darryl Nixon 1987
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Prayer Seeking Reconciliation

God of love,
There are days when we struggle to see
Another's point of view.
There are days when loving without
Expectation is hard to do.
There are days when letting our hands
reach out to others seems like
an impossible task.
There are days when the
Call to be your people in this world
Feels like a yoke that is too heavy to carry
For these days, we pray for forgiveness.
For these days, we pray for strength.

(time of silence to offer personal prayers)

Affirmation of Forgiveness

Friends! I get to share this news:
God is not only a God of love,
But a God of grace.
In God, there is a place where all are welcome,
All may be forgiven
All will be comforted,
All will be loved.

This is Good News!

Thanks be to God! Amen.

Prayer written by Jamie Miller, Dryden, Manitoba
Gathering: Pentecost 1 (year A) page 43, used with permission.

Sung Response: MV#97 Listen, God is Calling

(Listen) Listen, God is calling,
Through the word inviting,
Offering forgiveness,
Comfort and joy.

Words and music: traditional song, Tanzania; Trans Howard S. Olsen
Arrangement: More Voices, 2007
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Sharing the Story

Hymn: VU#230 Heaven is Singing for Joy

Heaven is singing for joy, hallelujah
For in your life and in mine
Is shining the glory of God.

Refrain

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Heaven is singing for joy, hallelujah
For your life and mine unite

in the love of our God.

Heaven is singing for joy, hallelujah
For your life and mine
Will always bear witness to God.

Words: Pablo Sosa, 1991

Music: Pablo Sosa, 1991; arr. Catherine Ambrose, 1995

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WE LISTEN

Scripture: Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30

Reflection

My sermon this morning was inspired
By one written by Rev. Amanda Currie,
Minister at First Presbyterian here in Regina.
I have her permission.

It is Jesus' MO to show up in villages, in cities,
In the countryside, on the beach, at the river
And, for better or worse,
in the middle of people's lives.
Jesus shows up in the middle of people's lives
And invites the to respond to his message,
To his presence,
His call.

Jesus shows up on the beach on the Sea of Galilee,

And reached out to some fishermen
To radically change the course of their lives.
He said: "Follow me,
And I will make you fish for people"
And they did, leaving everything behind.

Jesus showed up at Matthew
The tax collector's booth and said to him:
"Follow me"
And Matthew got up and left everything behind.

Jesus shows up in the middle of a crowd,
Healing those who were sick,
And casting out spirits.
One person out of all gathered
Tells Jesus of his intention to follow,
Just as soon as he buried his father.
Jesus responded:
"Follow me,
And let the dead bury their own dead."

Jesus shows up to a rich man
Who was wrestling with big questions,
Like what to do in order to be saved.
The rich man claimed to follow the commandments,
So that shouldn't have been a problem.

Jesus said to him,
"If you wish to be perfect,
Go, sell all of your stuff,
And give the money to the poor,
Then you will have treasure in heaven.
When you've done that
Come and follow me."
The man went away grieving
For he owned many things.

Jesus shows up in the world
Preaching a radical, inclusive love,
Sharing the Good news of God's presence
In all of creation,
And calling people to follow.
Sometimes, they dropped all
And followed right away.
Sometimes they decided that
What Jesus was asking was too hard.
Or it wasn't really something they wanted to do,
And declined his invitation.

Today's passage from Matthew
Finds Jesus lamenting the poor response
Of the people to his call.
His mission was running into some bumps,

And there had been some who had followed,
But by and large, the response had been under-
whelming,

To say the least.

Jesus compares the people of his generation,

These people he was trying to call,

Well, he compares them

To children sitting in the marketplace

Shouting to one another:

"We played our instruments,

You didn't dance.

We cried,

And you didn't cry with us!"

It's like the kids are trying to organize

Some make believe game,

But their friends aren't playing along.

They try playing wedding,

And the other kids won't dance.

The try playing funeral,

And the others refuse to play

The part of the mourners.

The fact is that the people

Of Jesus' generation have not responded properly...

Not to his message,

Not even to the message of John the Baptist

Who came before him.
When John did the wilderness thing,
Preaching about repentance and baptism
Most of the people who gathered to listen
Thought he was crazy.
Now Jesus is preaching about God's love
And about eating and drinking with the people
In their homes and in their communities.
His message? Rejected too
People call Jesus a glutton and a drunkard,
A friend of tax collectors and sinners!

In the next verses,
Jesus moves from reproaching the people
To reproaching the cities
In which most of the power had been held,
And misused...
He chastises the cities because they didn't repent,
They didn't turn themselves around.
Jesus did amazing things in
Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum,
And the people watched Jesus do them,
And they ignored them,
Leaving their lives unchanged.

Jesus has a choice here:

Be stuck feeling angry and disappointed
Or move beyond that and look at the successes.
Jesus looks to those who had responded to his call:
the fishermen and the tax collectors,
To the outcasts and other seemingly unimportant
people
Who had actually left everything
And who are trying their best to follow him.
Jesus prays,
"I thank you, God,
Because you have hidden these things
From the wise and intelligent and
Have revealed them to infants..."
Then Jesus offers his invitation again...
He invites the people gathered around him
To commit to his call.
He tells them what it really means
For them to respond to his message
And this invitation.
This invitation, this call to follow
Passes through the ages to us,
Inviting us to consider our response as well.

"Come to me,
All you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,

And I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you,
And learn from me;
For I am gentle and humble in heart,
And you will find rest for your souls.
For my yoke is easy
And my burden is light.”

Often, our first thought
When we hear the word “yoke”
Is that of burden, or hard backbreaking work.
We hold in our minds those pictures
Of cattle yoked together
Spending all their energy doing hard labour
In the fields.
So, why would it be any different for us.
If we are to be yoked,
Wouldn't that mean that we would
Be in the same situation as the cattle?
I think we understand, at some level,
That the invitation to follow
Isn't one to a smooth garden path
Full of rainbows and butterflies.
The call of Jesus is not an easy one.
Look at the mixed response he got
In his own time...

Some of the disciple potentials
Decided not to follow because
It meant leaving too much behind,
And giving up on priorities and comforts.
That was simply too much to ask,
And so they said "no thanks."

This isn't the first time
That Jesus has issued a call
That required a little heavy lifting.
In chapter 10,
Jesus offers these challenging words:
*Whoever loves their father or mother more than me
Is not worthy of me...*
*And whoever does not take up the cross
And follow me is not worthy of me.*
Those are heavy words,
Bearing a heavy challenge
For carrying a cross is hard word
And is symbol of a willingness to give up everything
For Jesus' ministry.

This makes today's invitation
Seem feather light in comparison.
He tells the disciples and would-bes.
That following involves taking on a burden –

A yoke across our shoulders.
But in this case, Jesus' metaphor
Isn't about being yoked together like oxen,
With Jesus walking behind directing the work,
Or pushing you to keep going.
I wonder if this image of Christ as the master
And followers as individual yoked oxen,
is sometimes how religion is seen,
particularly by those not connected
to the Christian faith.
Week after week,
They see Christians going to church
To be reminded over and over
How we are to live.
They imagine that we keep returning
To this place where we are scolded
For our lack of effort,
For our mistakes and missteps,
All the while we are prodded
Back into a more faithful way of living.
Put that way,
It's no wonder they are confused
By our attendance...
Why wouldn't we just sit back and enjoy life
Without the constant reminder of guilt and inade-
quacy.

But when Jesus offers the invitation
That we heard today,
He is talking about the kind of yoke
That is designed to bring two animals together
So that they work in team,
Rather than on their own.
The basic definition of a yoke
Is a wooden beam normally used between
A pair of oxen or other animals
To enable to pull together on a load
When working in pairs,
As oxen usually do.

I wanna dig into the work "yoke"
A little as it isn't one that we use a lot in conversation.

The word's root comes from the
Proto-Indo-European word "yugom"
And the verb "yeug" which means
"to join" or "to unite".
It doesn't have anything to do with
Anything that needs to be carried,
It is not related to burdens in anyway.
It's main meaning has to do with
Two things being united together

For a common purpose.
Holding that in mind,
Jesus' metaphor moves from
Jesus being the task master directing
The hard working creature,
But rather that Jesus is the other animal,
The other creature that shares the work,
And who works together with us
Towards a common goal.

Now, I have to admit that
I am not much of a farmer,
Okay, I grew up in Vancouver,
I'm not a farmer at all,
But I can see that there
Is more than one reason for yoking
Two oxen together to plow a field
Or to carry a load.
The most obvious reason
Is that together, two oxen
Can carry more weight than one on its own.
But one of the other reasons
Is that a younger ox can be yoked
To a more experienced ox,
Giving the young one the chance to learn
From one that already knew the ropes.

If we look at Jesus' invitation
As one inviting us to be yoked to him,
Then we can see this metaphor
As one of opportunity.
An opportunity to learn from
And work with him.
It's not about us toiling away,
Weighed down,
Desperately trying, failing,
And trying again to live into Christ's
Call to radical love and hospitality
But rather walking with Jesus,
Working together so that we are
Partners in the sometimes tough work
He is calling us to,

It reminds me a wedding ritual that
Is found in many places globally,
Including the Philippines,
Which involves the couple being bound
Together with a symbolic cord.
As they make their vows to each other,
They don't know what lies ahead for them
But they know that no matter what comes their way,
They will encounter it as a team –

Bound together in love and faithfulness.
They commit to be together, to work together,
To carry burdens together,
And to celebrate the joys together.
They are yoked together
And they know it won't always be easy,
That it will be a lot of work.
But they also believe that by joining their lives together,
By committing to be together,
And by shouldering the burdens together,
That everything will be better, easier, maybe lighter.

But, in case you were confused,
This isn't a wedding sermon.
It doesn't matter your marital or non marital status,
The message of the gospel is for
Every single one of us.
It is an invitation to us,
A proposal to us
That we work in team with Jesus
Staying close enough to learn from him
What it means to be humans,
Disciples,
Living in this sacred creation,
Where we face every difficulty with help,

And taking on every challenge
Knowing that we do so in team,
With each other and with Jesus.

So, today,
Whether for the first time
or for the thousandth time,
we are invited to hear
and to respond to Jesus' invitation.

For Jesus calls to us:

*Come to me,
All you that are weary,
And are carrying heavy burdens,
And I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you,
And learn from me;
For I am gentle and humble in heart,
And you will find rest for your souls.
For my yoke is easy,
And my burden is light.*

Special Music

Dedication of Gifts shared during the pandemic

Prayers of the People & The Lord's Prayer
(sung VU#959)

Hymn: VU#626 I Heard the Voice of Jesus

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 "Come unto me and rest;
Lay down, O weary one, lay down
 Your head upon my breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
 Weary and worn and sad;
I found in him a resting place,
 And he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 "Behold, I freely give
The living water; thirsty one,
 Stoop down, and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank
 Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched,
 My soul revived,
And now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 "I am this dark world's light;
Look unto me, your morn shall rise,
 And all your day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found
 In him my star, my sun;

And in that light of life I'll walk
Till traveling days are done.

Words: Horatius Bonar, 1846
Music: English and Irish Traditional melody
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Commissioning and Benediction

Sung Amen (VU#974)

Amen! Amen! Hallelujah, amen!

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Postlude