

May 25, 2025, Rural Life Sunday
Authentic Living
Hub Partner: Knox United Church

Prelude

Welcome

Check In: What is your favourite place to be on a sunny day?

"I'm sorry for the things I said when it was winter." —Unknown

"In early June the world of leaf and blade and flowers explodes, and every sunset is different." —John Steinbeck

"Summertime, and the living is easy." —George Gershwin

"Then followed that beautiful season ... summer. Filled was the air with a dreamy and magical light; and the landscape lay, as if new-created in all the freshness of childhood." —Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate. Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, and summer's lease hath all too short a date." —William Shakespeare

Acknowledgement of the Land and Commitment to Reconciliation:

Ahniin, We acknowledge that the land on which St. Paul's United Church is located is the traditional land of the Wendat and Anishinaabe First Nations. We wish to acknowledge also the land on which Knox United Church is situated. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Chippewas.

Today, our meeting places are still home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island, including the Metis, our neighbours on Christian Island, Beausoleil First Nation, and the Chippewas of Georgina Island. We are grateful to have the opportunity to worship and work on this land. We are all Treaty People.

This week, we honour Mandy Gull-Masty who was named Minister of Indigenous Services Canada by Prime Minister Mark Carney. She was head of the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee) prior to running for a seat in the House of Commons.

We commit ourselves to walking in a new way together: a path of healing and hope. Chi-Meegwetch

Call to Worship

Many of the early flowers are bell shaped or bell named. Snowdrops, bluebells, daffodils, lily of the valley... They are the early sign of summer to come.

They call us to walk in the woods and search for joy and beauty.

Today we will be called into worship by bells.

Let us travel together as a beloved community in search of joy and beauty.

Praise with Timbrel and Dance – St. Paul's Bell A'Peal Handbell Choir

Song of Praise: VU579 The Church is Wherever God's People ..

We now invite our friends at Knox to lead us in the opening prayer and candle lighting

Opening Prayer

Reader: Knox

Creating God,

provide us with all that we need to grow into who you have created us to be:

As the womb of the earth nourishes seeds,

may we be nourished by this gathered community and the assurance of your holy presence.

As the sun provides energy, leading seeds to transformation,

may we find the courage to embrace new life through the example of Jesus.

As water refreshes and replenishes growing seedlings,

may we be restored by the movement of the spirit.

In times of drought,

when we cannot feel your warmth or taste your goodness,

protect us from harmful attitudes and actions that may secure our well-being at the cost of others,

and lead us again to abundant life.

Amen.¹

Lighting of Christ Candle

Prayer:

As we light this Christ Candle, may it remind us
that Christ is in us and in our world.

Peace of Christ

We now join together as St. Pauls leads us in our gathering song

Sung Response

There is Room for All MV62

¹ Prayer from, Recognizing That Food Is Sacred, A Seed Service. From The United Church of Canada

Theme Conversation: Seeds

Children's Song: MV48 I Can Feel You Near Me God vs1 and chorus

The Story: Galatians 1:13-17 Galatians 2:11-21

Reader:

1: 13 You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. 14 I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. 15 But when the one who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace was pleased 16 to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the gentiles, I did not confer with any human, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterward I returned to Damascus.

2: 11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood self-condemned, 12 for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. 13 And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the gentiles to live like Jews?"

15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not gentile sinners, 16 yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through the faith of Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. 17 But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! 18 But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. 19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ, 20 and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

Song for Reflection: VU581 When We Are Living

Sermon: Being Ourselves

Life and Work of the Church

Offering of Thanksgiving

We are made for goodness. We are made for love. We are made for friendliness. We are made for togetherness. We are made for all of the beautiful things that you and I know. We are made to tell the world that there are no outsiders... We all belong to this family, this human family, God's family.

- Desmond Tutu

Offertory Music:

All Things Bright and Beautiful – St. Paul's Bell A'Peal Handbell Choir

Offertory Response: Loving God vs 3

We now turn to our friends at Knox to lead us in Celebrations and Concerns and the prayers.

Celebrations and Concerns

Prayers of the People

Reader: Knox

Holy One, in the outpouring of your Spirit, we affirm that you have not left us alone. You have called us to be the church—your people, guided by that Spirit to live lives of abundance and generosity. For that, we give you thanks and praise.

We give thanks for whose we are—children of the living God. We declare our identity as those claimed by Christ. We anticipate the kind of community we will become—a church fully alive in the Spirit.

As we heed your call in our lives, we give thanks and glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. And so we raise up the celebrations shared among us today and those we hold in our hearts.

Gracious God, give us gentle hearts to walk with those who are hurting—the sick, the sad, and the lonely. Help us speak words of comfort and be a loving presence to the people around us.

Redeeming Saviour, give us courage to stand up to injustice, to use our power and privilege to challenge oppression, to offer grace and mercy to those who have wronged us.

Eternal Spirit, crack open our hesitancy to extend generosity to others. Break through our fears and dismantle our prejudices. Make us responsive to your presence in our lives.

Into this time of silence, O Lord, we offer up to you all those people and situations that lie close to our hearts. Hear our prayers, O God, and in your love answer...

(silence)

Glory to God, from generation to generation, across differences and localities, in the church and through the Spirit, now and forever. Amen.²

And so we join our voices together in the prayer that has been spoken in many places in many languages. The prayer Jesus taught,

Our Mother/Father who art in heaven...
hallowed be 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;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

We now join our friends at St. Paul's as they lead us in our final hymn, All The Way My Saviour Leads Me.

Song for the Journey: VU635 All The Way My Saviour Leads Me

Extinguishing of the Candles Blessing

Closing: Halle Halle Halle

Postlude

² Prayer adapted from Week 5 of The Early Church in Eastertide Congregational Giving Program. United Church of Canada.

Beyond Sunday: An Invitation to explore Centering Prayer³

Centering Prayer is so called because the idea is to become more and more acquainted with God as the centre of your life, as well as more and more authentically who you are meant to be at your personal center. We put up many barriers and walls between our being and how we show up in the world (face to face or online). Sometimes it is almost as if we are playing a character with our name. Centering prayer is an invitation to set aside the world's expectations, our expectations, and discover more about who we are meant to be. It is similar to Jesus invitation to "come as a child" or "to be reborn." Thomas Keating, a key teacher of this method talks about levels of awareness.⁴ We move through the ordinary, to the spiritual, to the true self, and finally to our connection with the divine. A simple outline of the method is presented below. Maybe if you have some time in the garden, your balcony, or the beach, give it a try.

Blessings,
Rev Kirsty

HOW TO "DO" CENTERING PRAYER:

- Find a quiet space where you are unlikely to be disturbed.
- Sit in a way that allows you to be relaxed in body and alert in mind. Use a chair, meditation cushion or prayer rug, according to your own needs and preferences.
- Gently close your eyes.
- "Allow your heart to open toward that invisible but always present Origin of all that exists " (p. 6) Whenever you become aware of a thought, no matter what its nature, let it go.
- Use a "sacred word". This is a word or short phrase that helps you to let go of thoughts. It is a reminder of your intention to remain open to the silence. Generally sacred words fall into one of 2 categories: "God" words/phrases such as "Abba", "Jesu", "Mary", "Reality", "Come Lord" or "state" words/phrases such as "love", "peace", "be still". Sacred words are not used as mantras, as in constantly repeating them, but as a reminder of your intention to remain open.
- Continue this practice for 20 minutes. At the end of the time get up and go about your business, leaving the practice behind, in the same way you let go of your thoughts.
- People who are just beginning, and are particularly restless in mind and body, may find it easier to start off with shorter prayer periods, perhaps only 5 minutes per sit to start. Then after a few days extend the time to 10 minutes and so on until you are able to sit for 20 minutes. Give the practice at least 2 weeks before you decide if it is right for you.

³ <https://www.contemplative.org/contemplative-practice/centering-prayer/>

⁴ https://youtu.be/5FWvxwfn_CE