

**UCW Worship Service for the 100th Anniversary
of the United Church of Canada
"Here I Am"
June 1, 2025**

Introit MV 7 'Gather Us In'

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.

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

This week, we acknowledge the complexity of sharing resources in the spirit of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum agreement.

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

Call to Worship

One: Creator God, You call.

ALL: We come as others came before us.

One: You call your people to do your work.

ALL: We come to listen to your call.

One: As our ancestors listened to your call to action one hundred years ago.

ALL: Here we are.

Opening Hymn VU 395 'Come In, Come In and Sit Down'

Gathering Prayer

Creator God, we come in search of unity with others and with you. We have not always listened. We have not always heard. We come in gratitude to you for walking with us on our journey.

Be with us now as you have with those who have gone before. Be near us as we strive to listen to each other and walk together as one United Church. We welcome all to celebrate God's presence in their lives. Let us join to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world.

We join our voices in the words of prayer that Jesus taught us to pray...**THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Candle Lighting

- **Prayer:**

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

- **Sung Response**

There is Room for All MV62

- **Peace of Christ**

Children's Time (optional – use if children present)

(Use 3 large letters (Dollar Store). Hold them up one at a time, not in order. U C W)

Hold up letters one at a time and ask: What could this letter stand for?

(Accept all the kids' crazy answers)

Then put the letters in order.

UCW – in our church these letters stand for – UCW – United Church Women.

Once a minister told me the UCW is the backbone of the church.

What do you think he meant?

(Accept all answers and then guide the children toward some of the things the UCW do, what they stand for etc.)

Look around. Can you show me someone who you think might be a UCW member. Why don't we ask them to stand up and we can thank them for all they do by clapping our hands.

Children's Hymn

MV 156

'Dance With the Spirit'

Scripture**1 Samuel 3: 1–19**

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' and ran to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call; lie down again.' So he went and lay down. The LORD called again, 'Samuel!' Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.' Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.' Then the LORD said to Samuel, 'See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. On that day I will fulfil against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I am about to punish his house for ever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering for ever.'

Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. But Eli called Samuel and said, 'Samuel, my son.' He said, 'Here I am.' Eli said, 'What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you.' So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, 'It is the LORD; let him do what seems good to him.'

As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.

Matthew 10: 5–15 Bold Discipleship

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near." Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for labourers deserve their food. Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgement than for that town.

Reflection

Here We Are!

Please use your imagination. Let's go back in time to 100 years ago. There is a large gathering at an arena in Toronto on June 10, 1925. Muriel from the Women's Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church is there. She says, Here I am, we need to keep helping our men and women overseas. Here I am, I am with you, yells Claire from the Woman's Missionary Society from the Methodist Church. Anna from the Congregational Woman's Board of Missions says, Here I am, I am also with you. We need to all work together as the new United Church of Canada's Woman's Missionary society. The Church's overseas mission work and service to God must continue.

Another woman, Sarah, from the Methodist Ladies Aid Society, also stands up and says, Here I am. We must continue to deepen the spiritual life of women. We will be there to support our local ministers, visit those that are not well, participate and lead in Christian education.

Many women joined, and the United Church Woman's Association came to be. Many years later the Woman's Missionary Society (WMS) and the Woman's Association (WA) came together and on January 1, 1962, the UCW was born.

The UCW has been and continues to be an instrument of change. We have adapted over the years, and it is one thing we do well. Each decade has brought change, and new problems to solve. We have had to adapt, even as to how, when and where we have gathered and shared fellowship with each other. The role of women in society, in families, and also in the Church has changed and the women of this United Church of ours have always been there.

In 1925, Church changed, and the United Church of Canada was formed. The 1930s saw our first female minister ordained, Rev. Lydia Gruchy. As the decade went on looming unrest in Europe was on our minds. The 1940s was consumed with war. The United Church resisted pressure to support Conscription. The Canadian Council of Churches was formed, with the United Church a member. A few years later, the World Council of Churches was formed. The 1950s was a time of growth. The baby boom was upon us. There were many growing congregations, and it was a time for developing a new curriculum for theological studies and Church Sunday Schools.

In 1962 the UCW was formed. There was much discussion on ministry in the 20th century. The United Church offered emergency aid to American Vietnam draft dodgers. And before the end of the decade union with the Evangelical United Brethren was formalized. In the 1970s the church released a statement: "There is one ministry, the ministry of God into which ministry he calls his whole church." By the end of the decade, inclusiveness of lay people in ministry began.

In 1980, Rev. Lois M. Wilson became our first female moderator, and in 1986, we elected our first female lay person as moderator, Dr. Anne M. Squire. Before the end of the decade the United Church issued our first apology to Indigenous congregations. Before the end of the 1980s the United Church declared that all members of the United Church, who

profess their faith in Jesus Christ, are eligible to be considered for ordered ministry regardless of their sexual orientation.

In the 1990s *Voice's United* was published with new inclusive language.

Wow! What a concept. We could think of God as our Mother as well as our Father. But United Church Women had known that for decades.

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, the church dealt with issues of Truth and Reconciliation, anti-racism, HIV-Aids pandemic, peace building in Israel and Palestine just to name a few. The next decade continued with the previous endeavours and much work was done on a new governance structure.

The United Church has had many growing pains and will continue to do so. No matter what the problem, issue, upheaval, or injustices we face and witness in our country and around the world, the UCW is determined to stay together and continue with our mission.

The world has changed, the United Church has changed, but the feelings we share in our UCW meetings remain the same. Whenever United Church Women get together, the joy, the gratitude, the blessings, the love, the security, the openness, the comfort, the unity, and the fellowship is the same as it always was and will continue to be. We support each other and those around us, through our times of trial, sorrow, and grief. We also know how to celebrate with gratitude our infinite blessings and joys. No matter what the task, no matter how difficult the problem, there is always a UCW member who will say, Here I am. We shine with our leadership, we are bold disciples, we dare to push for justice, and we do all of this in the name of Jesus, Thanks be to God. Oh, and I almost forgot, when coffee is needed, HERE WE ARE!

Hymn VU 509 'I, the Lord of Sea & Sky'

1 Samuel 3: 1–19

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Life and Work of the church

Offering

Offertory: Taste His Goodness St. Paul's Choir

Offering Hymn MV191 'What Can I Do'

What can I do? What can I bring?
What can I say? What can I sing?
I'll sing with joy. I'll say a prayer.
I'll bring my love. I'll do my share.

Offering Prayer

Loving God, You, have given us so much, have called us to use our time and talents and treasures, united in Your service. Receive our gifts as an expression of our love for You, and of our loyalty and devotion to Jesus

Christ. May they be used for the total mission of the United Church responding to Your call to build a new and better world for tomorrow

Communion Hymn VU 467 'One Bread, One Body'

Celebrations and Concerns

Communion

Communion Liturgy

One: The Holy One be with you.

All: And also with you.

Open your hearts to the One who is Love.

We open our hearts to you, O God.

Let us give thanks to God, our Creator.

For the courage of the Holy that lives in us, we give thanks.

Bold and Beloved One, throughout history you have revealed yourself to us in ways that surprise and disrupt.

You shocked the world when you came to be with us as a vulnerable baby born into a family fleeing political persecution.

Though the scandal of your embodiment in Jesus led to crucifixion, still your Spirit of New Life is birthed anew among the marginalized.

You live among us today:

In the lives of Black, Indigenous, Asian, and People of Colour everywhere.

Among people living with disease and disability.

As babies born into the poor and marginalized families.

You wander school halls as children who are bullied and teens who struggle to be perfect.

You come to us as 2SLGBTQIA+ youth with no home.

You are embodied by Two-Spirit people, still fighting against the impacts of colonization, erasure, and stolen land.

At times, we are offended by your self-expression. You take on flesh in people, places, and ideas we don't know about, or that we have been taught to fear or despise. And so we struggle. Our hearts harden. Our hospitality recoils.

But still, your love persists. Through beauty, compassion, and truth, you lure us into laying down our need to control. You move us. Free us. Embrace us.

By your grace, we are brought into the sacred labours of justice and transformation. We become free in Christ to reject all evil and oppression.

Like those who gathered with Jesus on the night of his arrest, we come in need of grace. After feasting with his companions, Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to all of them and said:

"This is my body which is given for you.
Take, eat, and remember me."

After the supper, he did the same with the cup, saying:
"This is a symbol of the new covenant. Drink in remembrance of me."

In remembering the life of Jesus, we remember what he showed us:

The love of God is public.

The love of God is intentional.

The love of God is explicit.

And so we pray, pour out your Spirit on this bread and this cup, O God. Through these gifts, open our hearts to encounters with Christ in the strange and the ordinary. May the bread of life and the cup of blessing strengthen us in our courage to live as Jesus lived. Amen.

The Gifts of God for the People of God

Prayer after Communion

All: Nourishing One,

your gifts renew us in body, spirit, and mind.

Through this taste of love,

may the Spirit send us with a faith that is brave.

Let no institution or habit of thinking hold us back;

make us people who boldly pursue collective justice

and tend gently to the world's pain. Amen.

Prayers of the People (VU 909, adapted)

Compassionate God,
 Hear us as we pray in this Anniversary year,
 For the UCW, with its history and hopes.....
 We pray for the church and the various ministries.....
 For your Church and its varied ministries.....
 For the work of justice and the healing of Creation.....
 For care of strangers, neighbours, family, friends,
 For those isolated by sickness, sorrow, violence, fear.....
 For those who face illness and death.....
 For those broken by the world.....
 In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Closing Hymn VU 332 'The Church's One Foundation'

Commissioning
 Loving God here we are.
 You call us to serve you to walk new paths,
 Not knowing where we are going,
 We know that your hand will lead us, and your love support us
 And we go out in Faith, Hope and Love.

Closing Prayer

And now, go with us, God, into the days ahead.
 Strengthen us for peace. Give us wisdom, keep us humble,
 And may we live and work together, and so striving,
 Build a new and better world for tomorrow. Amen

Sending VU 964 'Go Now in Peace'

Go now in peace, go now in peace.
 May the love of God surround you
 Everywhere, everywhere you may go.