

May 11, 2025 Christian Family Sunday¹

Prelude

Welcome

Check In: Talk about a woman who has been an inspiration or mentor for you.

"There's no way to be a perfect mother, but a million ways to be a good one." – Jill Churchill

"My mother had a great deal of trouble with me, but I think she enjoyed it." – Mark Twain

"To describe my mother would be to write about a hurricane in its perfect power." — Maya Angelou

"We are born of love; love is our mother." —Rumi

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, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous People from across Turtle Island, including 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 honour Tréchelle Bunn, who was just elected chief of Birdtail Sioux Dakota Nation in Manitoba. At 25 she is the youngest person, and first woman, in the role. She recently received a King Charles III medal and an Indspire award for her community service. Ms Bunn is currently studying to be a lawyer. She is hoping that her accomplishments will inspire other young Indigenous people to take up leadership and service in their communities.

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

¹ Prayers and responses have been adapted from: Kin to One Another Worship Resources for Christian Family Sunday

Call to Worship

Creator, parent of the human family,

we gather to worship you.

In baptism, we are called beloved children of God, as such,

we gather to worship you.

Friends, neighbours, siblings in faith,

we gather to worship in song, in prayer, reading the Word, in thoughts and reflections.

And so we worship in this space that God is creating,
where all are embraced.

Together we become beloved community.

Song of Praise: MV178 Who is My Mother?

Opening Prayer

Reader: Herb van den Dool

God, creator of us all, we gather to worship you.

We come as individuals, we come as families, we come as neighbours and friends.

We come here, where we are known by name,
welcomed with all our fragilities and strengths.

We gather with kindred spirits who long to live faithful to your calling.

Guide us, inspire us, challenge us, comfort us, strengthen us, and nurture us in this
time of worship so that we might be enabled to return to our daily lives ready to
engage fully with all of your creation. We pray. Amen.

Lighting of Christ Candle

Prayer:

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

Sung Response

There is Room for All MV62

Peace of Christ

Welcoming New Members

The church is a community of people with varied gifts united by the Holy Spirit. We gather to celebrate God's presence, to discern God's truth, and to follow the way of Jesus. By our baptism we are made members of Christ's church.

We live out this membership within a local community of faith. Today we welcome into this congregation members of Christ's family who have decided to make St. Paul's their home.

On behalf of St. Paul's congregation I present the following persons:

New Members Commitment

... Will you join with us as we celebrate God's presence, live with respect in creation, love and serve others, seek justice and resist evil:

I will, with God's help.

Congregational Commitment

Dear friends in Christ let us pledge to these beloved friends our support and care.

As siblings in Christ, we rejoice in the gifts you bring to us. We pledge to you our love and our support. With God's help, we will together live out the mission and ministry of Christ's church.

Theme Conversation: The Human Family

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

The Story: Acts 8:26-39**Reader: Heather McDonald**

26 Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Get up and go towards the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' (This is a wilderness road.) 27 So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over to this chariot and join it.' 30 So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' 31 He replied, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. 32 Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

'Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.
33 In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth.'

34 The eunuch asked Philip, 'About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?' 35 Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. 36 As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?'[b] 38 He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip[c] baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

Song for Reflection: MV12 Come Touch Our Hearts**Sermon: Belonging****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: (St. Paul's Choir)

Offertory Response: Loving God vs 3

Celebrations and Concerns

Prayers of the People

Reader: Herb van den Dool

Our faith blesses us with stories of others who have sought to live in life-giving relationships. As we remember these siblings in faith, remind us of your guidance and presence with us. Let us pray—

God of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam; God of Mary, Martha, and Lazurus; God of siblings who cared for one another, offered support and challenge, celebrated together, worked together, argued together, and grieved together. We are thankful for their witness. As they have done may we also seek to live in life-giving relationships with those we would name as siblings.

God of Eli, Hannah, and Samuel, cross-generational colleagues, mentors, and trusted leaders in faith, remind us of the opportunities we have to nurture and care, mentor and discern with one another in this faith community. May we embrace the trust that is offered and shared with respect, care, and humility.

God of Ruth and Naomi, who embraced each other despite differences of race and cultural traditions and chose to be family for one another. For all who choose to be family, may your love and hope be sustained day by day.

God of Simon and Andrew and James and John, who left the familiar to build new community with Jesus and his followers. Though faithful, they had moments of doubt, of fear, of denial. In our moments of doubt, fear, and denial, may we remember to trust and to take one step at a time.

God of Hagar, Abraham, and Ishmael; God of Sarah, Abraham, and Isaac; God of the complicated, and the jealous, and the broken, remind us that this too is real and that you walk with us through these troubling times.

God of Mary and John, called to relationships that stretch beyond blood, to care for one another. You invite us too to reach out in welcome, support, and care for one another.

God of the past, God of the present, God of tomorrow, help us to live in relationships that seek justice, love kindness, and ground ourselves in your love for us.

And we continue in prayer together, sharing in a paraphrase of the prayer Jesus taught the disciples

Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe;
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world;
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings;
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trial too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and forever. Amen.

Song for the Journey: VU679 Let There Be Light

Extinguishing of the Candles

Blessing

Closing: Halle Halle Halle

Postlude

Beyond Sunday: Becoming An Affirming Church

Over the next few months, we will be moving into the process of becoming an Affirming Church. An Affirming Church is a trademarked word that means a church has undergone a time of study, reflection, and deliberation and made a deliberate choice to be a welcoming place for all, especially those who are 2SLGBTQ+. A few years ago, in Canada, this may have been seen as an easy decision. This church, like all churches, already welcomes everyone, so why not?

In this moment, with the very divisive conversations people are having around the world, especially about Transgender issues, it is different. Some in the 2SLGBTQ+ community feel under siege. There is more hatred, more fear, and more exclusion. In such a time as this, it becomes even more important to be deliberately and visibly supportive of "all."

Today's scripture story reminds us that truly all are included in the family of God: Ethiopians are welcome, eunuchs are welcome. Everyone belongs in the beloved community. Everyone is valued in the beloved community. Everyone is welcome to share their gifts in the beloved community. Everyone is cared for and supported in the beloved community. YOU are welcome in the beloved community at St. Paul's!

Blessings of Peace and Joy,
Rev Kirsty