



Pioneer Pastoral Charge

Sunday May 24, 2020

Easter 7 In It Together

Rev. Helen Reed, Diaconal Minister

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**Candle Lighting:** *The light of Christ... God around us,  
among us, within us.*

### ***Call to Worship***

Holy God, listen to your people praying  
**for your presence to be with us,**  
**as we gather in worship and praise,**  
Holy God, listen to your people praying.  
**for your encouragement**  
**as we go out into the world,**  
**seeking to do your will,**  
Holy God, listen to your people praying.  
**for the unity that we yearn for**  
**as the many members of one Body,**  
Holy God, listen to your people praying.  
**for the guidance of your Holy Spirit**  
**in opening our hearts to hear each other in love,**  
Holy God, listen to your people praying. **Amen.**

***Hymn:*** ♪ VU#400

**Lord, Listen to your children praying.**

Scripture is our song for the journey,  
the living word passed on  
from generation to generation to guide and inspire.  
**God calls us to be doers of the word**  
**and not hearers only.**

In the first scripture for us today, the Gospel of John puts the prayer of Jesus for his disciples immediately before his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Knowing that the world was about to become very dangerous... Jesus prayed for the welfare of others.

### **John 17:6-11** New International Version

#### **Jesus Prays for His Disciples**

6 “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.

7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.

9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.

11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

### ***Prayer for Grace:***

Holy God,  
we give you thanks for your love that  
has surrounded us from before the beginning.

Yet... all too often,  
we think that we alone belong to you,  
that we alone are your beloved,  
that we alone know the way to you.  
Too often,  
we exclude from grace  
those who seem different from us,  
those who use different words to speak of you  
or live their discipleship differently from us.

### **Forgive us, God**

for those times  
when we want Jesus' prayer to be just for us.  
**when we look for you in the heavens  
and refuse to see you on Earth.**  
when we try to hold you close  
instead of sharing you  
and your love with the world.  
**when we do not honour you by  
loving you in all that you have created.**

God of all,  
help us to feel the strength of your love,  
and your hope for intimacy with us in our daily lives.  
Help us to learn to live your love in the world  
to share your wisdom and with each other and all of  
your creation. **Amen.**

### ***Words of assurance.***

Even when we cannot see, or touch, or hear  
the presence of the divine among us,  
we know that we belong to God.

In Jesus, God came to be with us,  
to teach us, to live and love with us.

God is always with us. We are never alone.

**Thanks be to God! Amen.**

At the time of Jesus' ascension, he promised that  
the Spirit would continue to shape the disciples  
work and life of love going forward.

### **Acts 1:6-14 New International Version (NIV)**

6 Then they gathered around him and asked him,  
“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the  
kingdom to Israel?”

7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the  
times or dates the Father has set by his own  
authority. 8 But you will receive power when the  
Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my  
witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and  
Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their  
very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he  
was going, when suddenly two men dressed in  
white stood beside them. 11 “Men of Galilee,” they  
said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky?

### ***Message/Reflections: In this together***

One of the resources that I use to assist in creating our weekly worship service is Seasons of the Spirit. Those who put this resource together do so at least a year in advance. They have no way of knowing what circumstance the world might find itself in. They offer us their best and we are grateful for it.

The title of this week's theme that was chosen is "In it together" We have heard this and similar phrases a lot lately. Who would have known how appropriate that would have been because a year ago our present circumstance would have been unthinkable.

"In it together." This phrase holds so much. It tells us that there is something that we are sharing that is important. It tells us that we have something to do that is important.

Together. Not just for me, or mine. For all of us. These three simple words say that we must look after one another. They don't invite us to argue about how we got there (wherever 'there' is), they don't invite us to try to blame someone for getting us there. They say... here you are, now team up. What matters is how we work together in this there we are in, to care for our neighbours. What matters is our attitude.

The Gospel of John presents to us a prayer of Jesus. While in other Gospels, Jesus appeared to be scared and asking God for a way out of a

terrifying situation, in John Jesus prayed for someone else. The actual prayer is much longer than the few lines we heard today but in it, he did not ask for anything for himself. Even in those moments in Gethsemane when he knew that political power was about to make him a victim, even in those moments when violence was marching toward him, he prayed for others. Jesus prayed for those who followed him.

He prayed that they would come together to work for others, he prayed that these faithful would feel and live the strength and courage and love that he had taught them, that they had committed to. Jesus said that those who followed him had all the knowledge to do the right thing and asked God to give them the strength to do it.

In these troubling life times that we share, this 'there' that we are in, how are we reacting? Are we distracting ourselves and the people around us by worrying about how we got here (there are theories galore about that), are we finding ways to look after our neighbours or are we so stuck on ourselves that we don't care about the consequences of our actions on others. In these moments when misused power could make victims of us all are we living the love of God that we have committed to.

In our second reading for today, we find ourselves watching another change happening for the disciples. 40 days before this reading, Jesus had

been crucified and risen. In those 40 days he had appeared to disciples in different places and times to show that life after death was truth and that nothing would ever be the same again. Imagine their confusion, their trauma, their exhaustion with all that was changing around them. On this Ascension Day, Jesus reminded the disciples that they wouldn't know God's plans or schedule, but that their task would be to show the voice of love in the world for as long as necessary. Then Jesus was taken away into the clouds, not to reappear before them again.

They stop functioning and stand around waiting. Waiting for what? For more instructions? For things to go back to normal? Then Angel voices prod them and say "what are you waiting for?"

Because the disciples had received the guidance to love their neighbours.

They had received the knowledge that only in working together would they be able to share with others and create a community that would care and support the weak and the sick and the poor.

Instead of standing waiting, they were now to go and 'do'. Not for themselves but for others. The reality was that this group of faithful now had to go out into a still dangerous world and work for the good of others because that is what God asked them to do.

We find ourselves in a dangerous world. In our area we have been truly lucky that COVID has not swept through our vulnerable population. In great part that is because we have, collectively, together, made choices to protect each other by staying home, by limiting contact with family and friends. It is because we have done this that we don't have issues.

Like the disciples, we don't always like or understand what we are asked to do. When results appear to be different than we expected we get a bit testy. But, what we learn from their example is that, even if we don't like it our task as followers of Jesus is to put loving others first before ourselves and that be working together we can make a difference.

The lives of the disciples were forever changed by the events of those 40+ days. Riots led to the death of their friend and leader, their society would never be the same again. They would need to pull on all of their strength and faith to move them forward into finding new ways of living and being together.

In many ways we find ourselves in similar situations: traumatized by many changes in how we live; moving forward into a life that will never be the same as what we moved out of. Our attitude of loving others will be the way of making a new way forward that includes all people.



Are we standing wishing for what was? Or are we ready to team up together to create love and support for all of God's people?

As followers of the Christ, I invite you to join me in offering the world togetherness, care and compassion. Together, with the strength of the spirit, the guidance of Jesus and the Love of God we can make the world a better place. Amen.

### ***Offering Invitation***

Almighty God, we bring gifts of time, talent, and treasure and offer them to honour your work in the world. Bless all that we offer, that it might be for the stewardship and the nurture of your beloved creation, and of your children.

By our gifts,  
may your presence in this world be made known.  
By our gifts, may we embody your grace and love towards all that you have made. **Amen.**

***Hymn: ♪ MV#145 Draw the circle wide.***

***Prayer of God's People for God's People:***

Holy God,

We are reminded that your spirit and love surround us and inspire us in our lives.

We are reminded that your spirit and love are for all people.

We offer you our prayers and care for your world.

We pray for the leaders in our world.

**We are in a world-wide experience  
that is testing our capacity  
to have compassion for all of our neighbours.**

We recognize the patience, courage and strength  
that is needed for those who are  
leading us through this pandemic.

**May they continue to remember  
that their responsibility is for all people.**

May all people remember that  
leaders need our support and care for their work.

We pray for those who are  
supporting our world in their unselfish actions.

**We pray for and give thanks for  
first responders,**

for those who work in all levels of  
health and education institutions,

**for food providers, for farmers,**  
for spiritual leaders,

**for those who stay home,**

for those who choose their actions  
for the sake of others

We pray for the sick and the grieving.

There are many community members who are ill,  
some from a virus some from other concerns.

**We pray for their welfare.**

We pray for wisdom and patience  
for them and families on their journey.

There are community members who are grieving  
the loss of loved ones.

## **We pray for courage on their journey.**

We are not able to celebrate the life of loved ones as we are used to.

Yet, we are able to remember them to carry our memories with us. We pray that comfort will be found in the memories.

God, we pray for ourselves.

That we will remember your command to love one another,

**That we will remember that we are to make our decisions for the benefit of others,**

That we will listen for your compassion, guidance and care in our daily living.

**Amen.**

## ***αBlessing***

Let us go out from this place knowing the love of God is always with us.

Let us go out into the world, letting an abundance of God's love overflow from us as blessings to the world.

Let us go, not standing and wishing, but being the face of God in our communities.

May the grace of Jesus the Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit  
be with all of us, today and always. Alleluia! Amen.

## ***Changing the Christ Candle:***

The light of Christ, shining into all the corners of the earth,  
showing us where we are and where we are meant to be.  
The Spirit of God. Breathe it in...and know that God is with us  
wherever we go.

## ***Hymn: 🎵 VU#402 We are one.***

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### ***Acknowledgements***

Seasons of the Spirit™ SeasonsFUSION Lent • Easter 2020

### Ways to share your offering:

We aren't meeting every week as we used to, but the work of the church continues with weekly online worship, weekly Tea Time Online, the provision of Pastoral Care.

Our buildings still need a bit of TLC and heat.

Please continue to send your financial support to the church.

It's great to know you are thinking of us as much as we are thinking of you 😊

1. Subscribe to PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance) Your monthly contributions come to us directly from your bank. Forms are available through Helen.
2. E-transfer. This option is currently available for
  - a. Cereal United Church: [CUCetransfers@gmail.com](mailto:CUCetransfers@gmail.com)
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