



Camrose United Church

Sunday February 6, 2021

Coming through...

Rev. Helen Reed, Diaconal Minister

Candle Lighting

We light the Christ Candle, aware of God around, among, & within us. In a moment of silence, we prepare ourselves to celebrate God's presence in our community.

Coming into Worship

In the faith stories shared through the ages,
and in our current life experiences
we are encouraged to listen for God's voice
and to respond to it.

During this 'ordinary' time of the church
when, through stories of our faith ancestors,
we look to find order in our world
and strength in our faith
we open our hearts to God's love.

We share this time of worship together,
even though we may hear it different times
and in different ways
we are joined together by our willingness
to hear, to learn to live God's love in the world.

Let us trust that God can make all places holy.
May our hearts be drawn toward
places that challenge us
to find and follow the Holy in
all our days and actions.
Come, let us worship and learn together

Hymn: 🎵 VU221 Sing Praise to God, Who Has Shaped

The prophet of Isaiah 40 called God's people to remember that God was their source of strength. Some scholars place the writing in the sixth century BCE when the people of Judah were living in exile following the Babylonian conquest. The temple and Jerusalem had been destroyed. Imagine the people's discouragement and weariness. The prophet reminded them of the power of God to restore and liberate, of God's desire to renew their strength.

Scripture Reading:

Isaiah 40:21-31 Common English Bible

21 Don't you know? Haven't you heard?

Wasn't it announced to you from the beginning?

Haven't you understood since the earth was founded?

22 God inhabits the earth's horizon—

its inhabitants are like locusts—

stretches out the skies like a curtain

and spreads it out like a tent for dwelling.

23 God makes dignitaries useless

and the earth's judges into nothing.

24 Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,

scarcely is their shoot rooted in the earth

when God breathes on them, and they dry up;

the windstorm carries them off like straw.

25 So to whom will you compare me,

and who is my equal? says the holy one.

26 Look up at the sky and consider:

Who created these?

The one who brings out their attendants one by one,
summoning each of them by name.

Because of God's great strength

and mighty power, not one is missing.

27 Why do you say, Jacob,

and declare, Israel,

“My way is hidden from the Lord,
my God ignores my predicament”?
28 Don't you know? Haven't you heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the creator of the ends of the earth.
who doesn't grow tired or weary.
God's understanding is beyond human reach,
29 giving power to the tired
and reviving the exhausted.
30 Youths will become tired and weary,
young men will certainly stumble;
31 but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength;
they will fly up on wings like eagles;
they will run and not be tired;
they will walk and not be weary.

Wondering:

As I thought about this scripture, I wondered...
How these words of over two thousand years ago
speak to the discouragement and weariness
of our world today?

I wondered what we would name as the anchors that we
perceive to have been destroyed?

I wondered who will remind us that God has the power to
restore us, to liberate us from that which holds us back, and
God will give us strength... and will we listen?

Prayer for Awareness and God's grace.

God of all ages,
these wisdom words from so long ago remind us
that when we find ourselves
in places that have changed,
in unfamiliar rhythms
feeling frustrated and hemmed in
you are with us ready to hold us and help us.

But we forget.

We forget to remember your goodness
that created something out of nothing.
We see the nothing and don't look for you.

We forget that we live in a world that you
filled with many possibilities.
**We get stuck in the chaos
and bogged down by too many choices.**

We forget to listen to and learn from
those who have gone before
and experienced the abundance and strength of your love.
**We forget your splendour, your power,
your willingness to be with us.**

Forgive us God.

Fire us up with faith and determination.
Give us the courage to move past our frustrations.
Give us the wisdom to see
the possibilities before us
to share care and compassion with each other
to follow you in new ways
to create something out of this chaos.

**May your Holy energy fill our souls so that
we will know you and love you in all of our living.**

Hymn: ♪ MV84 In You There is a Refuge.

Words of Assurance

On this Holy Earth, in this life filled with Holy possibilities
God sees what we cannot.
God sees the full extent of the struggles we face.
God sees, loves, empowers, and keeps us in grace.
God's forgiveness is ageless and abundant.
God is with us. We are not alone.
Thanks be to God.

Scripture Reading:

Mark 1:29-39 New Revised Standard Version

Jesus Heals Many at Simon's House

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. 31 He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

32 That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered around the door. 34 And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

A Preaching Tour in Galilee

35 In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. 36 And Simon and his companions hunted for him. 37 When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." 38 He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." 39 And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

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.**

Reflection:

Don't you know? Haven't you heard?

Haven't you understood? Today we are reminded by these questions and more that we coming through something together, that the answers are there if we will still ourselves and hear God's direction.

We continue in Marks Gospel following Jesus' Journey and see how he spoke to people in ways they would understand, how he offered healing of mind and body, how he lived the caring for people that he asked others to do.

He lived in a time when Government of Rome was oppressive and ruled by force. When those who were considered less were not often given the opportunity to be or have more. He gathered around himself like-minded people who wanted to see more equality in the world, who wanted to help others see the possibility of love in fearful circumstances and, together, they began a movement to turn the world upside down.

It wasn't quick. Indeed, it would not come into its own during the lifetime of many, but it was a movement that would ask people to think beyond themselves, to look for opportunities to offer justice, care, compassion. In these times of great trial, of great challenge today it would appear that we are being asked through the scriptures how we would serve God's world.

I am a Diaconal Minister in the United Church. In other or older traditions, we might be named Deacons or Deaconesses. The Greek word diakoneo means to serve. In our training for ministry we are taught to look at the world through the lenses of Education, Social Justice and Pastoral Care. These are the ways that we serve those around us.

Service can be offered in many ways. Through these lenses we are encouraged to offer the world education about caring for each other and about the power of faith; to be the voices that raise up inequalities, that speak with those who are unheard; to offer care and compassion in a hurting world with hurting people.

In today's scripture, using that Greek word for serving, Mark introduces the first deacon in the New Testament. Simon's mother-in-law. She is healed by Jesus and responds by serving those gathered in her house. She quietly gives us an example of setting self aside to serve those who followed Jesus.

There are many pieces in this small portion of scripture that we need to take notice of.

We need to notice that we cannot serve if we are not well ourselves—whether this is in body, mind, or spirit. There are times when we need to offer service and times when we need to accept help and healing offered to us. We should not need to be asked to serve. Simon's mother-in-law just got up to do what she could see needed to be done.

Jesus lived that sense of Diakonia too. Serving others. But did you notice in this scripture that he took time to find space for himself? He found a place to be where he could re-charge, connect with God and renew his strength to continue his service to others so that he could serve well.

The spirit of Diakonia in these stories speak to us of offering hospitality to others and ourselves, of learning to know that there are times to be in Sabbath, in a time of re-charging, that is a precursor to looking for others, for seeking justice for others, for teaching others.

Every Sunday worship I use words from the United Church Song of Faith that reminds us that we are “called to be doers of the word and not hearers only.” With these words we are reminded that we have to be in action for God’s people if we are to live faithfully for God.

Currently, we are asked to Sabbath for each other. To stay home and rest, to re-charge our energy in new ways in preparation for when we can get up and get out to do the things that we know need to be done.

The re-entry plan for Alberta is giving us glimpses of returning to be with each other that we long for, but perhaps we need to rest a while longer for healing first.

In our wisdom words from Isaiah for today, we hear a rebuke that reminds us to focus on the strength, power, compassion and love of God to get us through whatever challenges we face.

These words remind us to identify again the love of God that holds us, surrounds us and gives us strength. Again, we are told, God will breathe life into us.

When we are tired and exhausted God will lift us up. When we trust God to guide us we will find the strength to do what comes next. God will heal our souls and move us forward so that we can serve our family, our friends, our community in love.

As we move through these challenging times, I would share with you and invite you to experience that sense of Diakonia, that willingness to do what needs to be done for the communities that are so important to us. I would invite you to remember the power of God to give us the courage, the strength, the love to get us through.

Sit for a moment, breathe in the breath of God. Be lifted up, be lifted forward, be lifted by God’s love. This will bring us to where God needs us to be.

Hymn: VU808 On Eagle's Wings

Prayer by Ted Dodd. Member of DUCC (Diakonia of the United Church of Canada), President of DOTAC (Diakonia of the Americas and the Caribbean)

Jesus, you came to us in the synagogue and the home.

Jesus, you prayed in the bustle of the city
and the quiet of the desert.

Jesus, you offered open-door ministry
in the public realm and
reflected alone in the solitude of the private sphere.

We come to you in all manner of contexts:
rural and urban, young and old,
strong and weak,
saying with Simon and his companions,
“Everyone is looking for you.”

In infinite variety we seek divine presence,
holy mystery, sacred beauty:
looking for your peace and grace.
searching for your hope and vision.
pursuing purpose and meaning.

At this time on our planet,
fear is a fever, despair is a demon, cynicism is a sickness.
Jesus, healer, take us by the hand and
lead us toward reconciliation.
Lift us up out of stereotypes. Exorcise our apathy.

Jesus, preacher,
proclaim, again, your promise of another way.
Declare, again, your dream of justice and compassion.
Teach, again, your message of a non-violent,
non-dominating realm of God.

Holy One, who makes all things possible, lift us when we are weary. Be our strength and fill us with hope as we seek to serve you and our neighbour this day. Amen.

Offering Invitation & Dedication

As we recognize today that God's presence is in our everyday living,

we also recognize that we are called to be the physical embodiment of that presence in the world.

Let God be in our open eyes, open hands and open hearts as we offer the best we can for God's people.

May the gifts of our hearts, our labour, our treasure enable the church to be the light of God's Holy love in the world.

(M4M – Living the dream?)

In this time of pandemic

where we journey together and apart,

we come to reconnect with the Holy

as we sit in our homes;

some with company, some in solitude.

We are linked together by our faith and God's spirit that cannot be held back by walls or doors.

This meal we share is hosted by our God who meets us where we are.

Call to Give Thanks

The Lord be with you **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to our God!

It is good to give God thanks and praise.

Thanksgiving

Our words of Thanksgiving come to us from the Song of Faith of the United Church of Canada. We are reminded of who we are, whose we are and to live our call to be a church of justice and hope in the world.

Carrying a vision of creation healed and restored,
we welcome all in the name of Christ.

**Invited to the table where none shall go hungry,
we gather as Christ's guests and friends.**

In holy communion we are commissioned

to feed as we have been fed,

forgive as we have been forgiven,

love as we have been loved.

The open table speaks of the shining promise
of barriers broken and creation healed.

In the communion meal,

wine poured out and bread broken, we remember Jesus.

We remember not only the promise

but also the price that he paid

for who he was, for what he did and said,

and for the world's brokenness.

We taste the mystery of God's great love for us,

and are renewed in faith and hope.

Remembering Jesus, who invites us in:

At this table we remember that

Jesus invited his friends to God's table

Knowing that life was full of challenge

he reminded them of their commitment

to follow God's teachings so that

the world could grow into God's vision of love

He shared food with followers and friends,

with saints and sinners,

With crowds of thousands on the hillside,

and a few friends in an upper room.

He took a loaf of bread, and after giving thanks,
he broke it, and gave it to them, saying:

“Take, eat. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Then, he took a cup, and after giving thanks,
he passed it among them, saying:

“Drink this. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Through this loaf and cup, Jesus lives within us.

In word and deed, Jesus lives among us.

Prayer of Self-Giving

Eternal God,

you invite us to journey with you

and offer us,

through the simple things of life,

the chance to love and be loved,

to share and to receive,

to care and be cared for.

and as we come to you this day

we remember that your table is so large

as to encompass the whole earth.

We remember that the church has a purpose

To nurture faith and comfort hearts

To share gifts for the good of all

To resist forces that exploit and marginalize

To be fierce love in the face of violence

To defend all human dignity.

Loving the world as you do, as Jesus taught us,

may our actions be earth’s healing

Amen.

♪ *You are Holy, You are Whole:*

Prayer for Transformation

Holy One,
through walls and doors and faithful hearts,
send your Holy Spirit, upon these gifts of bread and cup.
**Let us eat this bread and taste the bread of life.
Let us drink from this cup
and gain sustenance for the journey.
Let us receive, with joy, the gifts you have provided,
for we ask this in Jesus's name. Amen.**
Thanks be to God...Thanks be to God.

The Prayer of Jesus

Let us join our voices together in prayer, as we gather all
people of the world to our hearts, as we sing together

**Our 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;
forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
lead us not into temptation,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours.
Now and forever. Amen.**

(Steven R. Janco. Music © 2000, WLP)

Sharing the Bread and Wine

Because of God's gifts we gather.
In this time and place we share:
Bread for the journey. The Cup of Blessing

Prayer after Communion

In this time together,
may we be reminded that our stories and ritual
bring us closer to God and each other.

May we invite the Christ to be our guest this day and always.

**May our eyes be opened to
the presence of God beside us
as we trust in the One who has promised
to love us and lead us always.
Amen.**

✠ Sending Forth and Blessing

In the reality of life,
there are Holy moments and places
waiting for us to recognize and live into them
God is ready to help us find our moment,

May the creative love of God,
the inviting path of Jesus,
the power of the Holy Spirit
pull us into a life of abundance,
gratitude and blessings
and be with us now and always.
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.

✠ Sending Song: ♪ May You Run and Not Be Weary

Inspired by:

Seasons of the Spirit™ SeasonsFUSION Advent • Christmas • Epiphany 2020–
2021

Gathering, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2020-2021



Your church continues to be a presence in the community, lending support to get us all through these challenging times together.

There are those who offer
words of care in cards and in phone calls.

Those who offer
prayer and compassion to others.

Those who continue to offer financial support
to enable the church to be an active participant
in world connections and healing.

With all of these things, God's world is richer, bolder, loving.

Financial support may be offered

1. By Mail.

Camrose United Church, 4829-50 Street, Camrose T4V 1P6
Oyen UC, Cereal UC Box 392, Oyen T0J 2J0

2. By PAR

Sign up with your church office to have your offerings automatically come to the church from your bank account each month.

3. By E-transfer

E-mail your donation through your on-line bank account.

Camrose United Church: camroseunited@yahoo.ca

Oyen United Church: oucetransfers@gmail.com

Cereal United Church: cucetransfers@gmail.com

4. Deliver in person at the church.

Camrose United Church – mail slot in South Door.

Oyen United Church – mail box at the Office Door

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