

**Worship on May 9, 2021 ~ Family Day
First United Church, Waterloo
The Rev. Rose Ann Vita**

We Are Gathered into a Family of Faith

THE WORDS OF THE MINISTER ARE IN RED

WELCOME & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

PRELUDE

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

From chapter 1 of the Gospel according to John: (Inclusive Bible)

IN THE BEGINNING

*there was the Word;
the Word was in God's presence,
and the Word was God.
The Word was present to God
from the beginning.
Through the Word
all things came into being,
and apart from the Word
nothing came into being
that has come into being.
In the Word was life,
and that life was humanity's light—
a Light that shines in the darkness,
a Light that the darkness has never overtaken.*

In this rendering of understanding of God's nature,
we can sense a mothering God . . . a God that gives birth and brings forth, a God that
enlightens and guides and shines throughout all creation.

By this understanding, I, the Rev. Rose Ann Vita, on behalf of my colleague, the Rev.
Harry Disher, and from the friends and members of First United Church . . . the "family"
of First . . .
extend our wishes for blessings upon all those who bring forth life, nurture growth, guide
and enlighten, shine love and hope, and fulfill a mothering role for others.

We hold the mothers who have lost a child . . . I have no words but the profound words
of silence . . . may you know God holds you dearly.

We also ask God's blessings on all creations and formations of families.

As we know, there are many ways that we live together as "families." We create household units, share homes with those of biological inheritance, and those who are gifts of through adoption. We live as partners, stepparents and stepchildren, brothers and sisters, and half-brothers and half-sisters.

We bond as a man and a woman, through same sex unions, via marriages and co-habitations. We include under our roof guests, family members, and those-just-passing through, friends of our children and couch-surfers, and extended generations of aunts, uncles, grandparents, and the estranged.

Upon all manner of your being together as "family" . . .
whether together or apart . . .
know that the light of Christ shines for you,
shines upon you, shines through you.

(Lighting the Candle the Candle)

Know that from the beginning of all time, you are blessed and have come into being through the Word, the Logos, the Wisdom of God, the Christ. . . . Amen

Today's worship service has been crafted by the United Church Women and interwoven with the gifts of the Youth and Children of First United and the voices of Lee Willingham, Eva Mezo-Willingham, their adult children Nora and Leah. Today's scripture comes from Isaiah 43:8b-18. Let us begin our time together by **singing Voices United 395, Come In, Come In and Sit Down** . . . oh, you already are in and sitting down . . . then let's sing!

CALL TO WORSHIP *Come In, Come In and Sit Down* VU 395

Chorus Come in come in and sit down

You are a part of the family

We are lost, and we are found

And we are a part of the family

Verse 1

You know the reason why you came

Yet no reason can explain

So share in the laughter and cry in the pain

For we are a part of the family

Refrain

Verse 2

God is with us in this place

Like a Mother's warm embrace

We're all forgiven by God's grace

For we are a part of the family

Refrain

Verse 3

Children and elders, middlers and teens

Singles and doubles and in-betweeners

Strong eighty-fivers and streetwise sixteens

We are a part of the family

Refrain

Verse 4

*There's rest for the weary and health for us all
There's a yoke that is easy and a burden that's small
So come in and worship and answer the call
For we are a part of the family* Refrain

OPENING PRAYER

As it is recorded in Isaiah 49, we hear our God say:
*"Can a mother forget the infant at her breast,
walk away from the baby she bore?
But even if mothers forget, I'd never forget you—never.
Look, I've written your names on the backs of my hands.
The walls you're rebuilding are never out of my sight."*

Thank you, God, that worship is a place where we might feel safe. Thank you that it is here where we are welcomed. It is within this gathering of friends and soon-to-be-friends where we are invited to be ourselves and be truly accepted and loved for who we are. In the midst of these, our brothers and sisters in Christ, is where we can feel at home and rest in your love. In the presence of this, our emerging church family, we have been gently and lovingly gathered together as your children. Thank you, God. May our prayers and praise bring us all closer together through your love. Amen

We Listen to Our Family Faith Stories

SCRIPTURE *Isaiah 43:8b-18*

God says,
You are my covenanted people.
I will renew the land and restore what has been taken away.
To the prisoners, I will shout: 'Come out!'
and to those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves!'
Your congested roadways will become
places where your cattle can safely graze,
and barren heights will become lush pastureland for your sheep.

You will never hunger or thirst,
and scorching wind and sun will never plague you.
For I, the One who has compassion and loves you,
will lead and guide you to springs of water.

God says,
I will make roads through all the mountains and raise up highways.
For behold, your loved ones are returning home.
They on their way from afar, some from the north or west,
others from a city in the east or south.

The choirs sing,
Shout for joy, you heavens!
Exalt, you earth! Mountains, break into song!

For God comforts those whom God created,
and has compassion on those who are suffering.

But the people say,
'God has abandoned me,
Adonai has forgotten me.'

God replies,
What? Does a woman forget her baby at her breast?
Or fail to cherish the child that she has birthed?
Yet even if mothers do forget their children,
I will never forget you.

Look and see:
I have inscribed your name on the palms of my hands,
I know you. I keep watch as you rebuild your life.

Look! Your children are hurrying back to you,
while those who harmed you are leaving.
Raise your eyes, look at the horizon—
your loved ones are gathering, they're all coming home!

As I live—I, your God—I promise:
You will adorn yourselves with your children like jewels,
and like a bride or a groom you will joyfully cloth yourself with their luster.

SPECIAL MUSIC

SERMON *I Will Never Forget You*

As I said earlier, this worship was crafted with the United Church Women, and it was a wonderful experience being part of a team that put this service together. We via Zoom, the women brought themes, and favourite hymns, and prayers . . . even the photograph of the hands was contributed by one from her visit to Ireland.

This teamwork is something that I would like to experience again, and I will be extending an invitation for those who would like to craft a summer worship with me, so if you are interested, keep your eye on the Friday letter or send me an email.

One of the directions I was given was to keep the sermon "short and sweet." And so, in obedience to these wise women, I shall.

We hear in today's passage from Isaiah --- that was in response to the Hebrew people of God being in exile and isolation and captivity, (similar to how some of us feel as prisoners of this pandemic and under "house arrest" and in isolation . . . even desperation!) --- these words attributed to God:

"Does a woman forget her baby at her breast?"

Or fail to cherish the child that she has birthed?

*Yet even if mothers do forget their children,
I will never forget you."*

How wisely said:

There is a concept in psychotherapy, "The Good Enough Mother,"
for as hard as we try, we are imperfect and don't always get the mothering part right.

And some mothers, have issues that prevent good mothering,
and children and offspring suffer . . .

So, today's passage covers the good, the good-enough,
and the not-so-good of mothering,
the cherishing and the failure to cherish . . .

This scripture clearly and boldly states:

*"Even if you feel abandoned,
I will not forget you.
I will never forget you.
See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands."*

(pause)

Would you take a moment and look at your hands . . .

(pause)

Can you **feel** the intent of God's words specifically for you?

*"I will never forget you . . .
I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands.
I know you.
I keep watch and rebuild your life."*

Today as you live this day,
every time you notice your hands . . .
as you eat your lunch . . .
and wash your hands,
as you perhaps pull some weeds . . .
or knit . . . or use a tool to fix something . . .
or type on the computer or tap a number on a phone . . .

Every time you notice your hands,
remember these words . . .

*"I will never forget you . . .
I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands".*

And embrace the love of God that will not let you go.

"Is this short and sweet enough?" Amen

Let's sing, **Voices United, Make a Joyful Noise**, page 820

SERMON HYMN *Make a Joyful Noise* VU, p.820

Refrain *Make a joyful noise all the earth!
Worship your God with gladness.
Make a joyful noise all the earth!
Come to this place with a song!*

*Know that your God has made you.
Know it's to God we belong.
And come to this place with joyfulness and praise.
Worship your God with a song!*

*Enter these gates, thanks-giving.
Enter these courts with praise.
Sing thanks to your God and bless the holy Name.
Worship your God with a song!*

*Ages through endless ages,
Seasons of endless years,
The love of our Maker ever shall endure.
Worship your God with a song!"*

We Care for One Another with Our Gifts

CALL FOR THE OFFERING

A SPECIAL INVITATION TO GIVE

This Sunday is Mother's Day and Family Day. It is time to support new mothers and their babies through Marillac Place. In the past, Irma would be smiling over a display table, but sadly she is no longer with us, and moreover we can't gather in the hall. But we can still support a cause so dear to her via digital or mailed donations.

Marillac Place provides expectant and new mothers with shelter and the material and emotional support they require for their own and their babies' health. Moms are encouraged to continue their education and are taught the life skills they need to raise their children.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxqagZa8k6U&ab_channel=MarillacPlace

Please give to Marillac Place so that Moms and their babies have a better chance of a rich and stable life. You can click the link to arrange a single or monthly payment. Or mail your cheque directly to Marillac Place, 109 Young St. Kitchener Ontario, N2H 4Z2. Thank you.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

May our financial offerings help us to love God; to foster Christian commitment, faithfulness, and spirituality; to care for new life and those who mother, and to promote respect and love for all God's creation. Bless these gifts and the givers. Amen

THE GIFT OF UNITED CHURCH WOMEN

Brief History:

In 1962 the UCW (United Church Women) was created as the successor to the Woman's Missionary Society (WMS), a world mission-oriented service and study group that supported almost 100 active missionaries around the world. The Woman's Association (WA) at that time focused on work in the local church and community. Guilds and Ladies' Aids were the WA's forerunners; in the early years, these units went unrecorded, just doing what needed to be done, spiritually, financially, and socially.

Today, that spirit of generosity continues in active UCWs in Communities of Faith and from coast to coast to coast, united in expressing their devotion to Jesus Christ in Christian witness, study, fellowship, and service.

The Vision of the UCW:

As women of faith, we believe in nurturing Christian spirituality by reaching out through commitment and devotion to all God's people in the promotion of truth, justice, peace, caring, and respect for all throughout the earth, God's world.

We believe in honouring God the Creator, and loving others through generous giving and joyful living; one of the ministries of the UCW is to support summer camps for children.

And we believe in affirming and strengthening ourselves both individually and together through creative study, prayer, and action.

In memory of women who have died since 2019

Loving God, we remember the generations of women who have gone before us. We remember their wisdom and their love:

<u>In 2019</u>	Mary Baechler
	Ruby Bennett
	Grace Christianson
	Bette Eccles
	Melba Farrell
	Yvonne Manderson

Beryl McIntyre

In 2020

Sylvia Bell
Marjorie Carroll-Nelson
Barbara Fulford
Irma Kadela
Doreen Klein
Ruth Macdonald
Dorothy McLaughlin
Peggy Norris
Catherine Raithby
Ruth Wagner
Eleanor Ward
Eleanor Weckman
Muriel Wray

In 2021

Audrey Bergey
Corrine Caldwell
Carol Class

(As a Candle is Lighted)

A little tribute small and tender, just to say, still remembered,
though absent, you are very near, still loved, still missed, and very dear.

In Thanksgiving for the Gift of Women

We give thanks the generations of women surrounding us now, sharing their wisdom and their love. We are grateful for these gifts passed on to us. We offer our prayers to the generations of women who come after us. They will build on the wisdom and love of past generations. They will be the beacon of light for the future. We are grateful for all these gifts given to us by You, Dear God. Amen

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE BY THE YOUTH & CHILDREN

Let us pray. Dear God, we open our hearts to you today.

We thank you for the colours of spring that bring us happiness.

We thank you for the beautiful weather that's coming. We look forward to enjoying the warmth and sunshine of long summer days.

We thank you for all the people in our families: those that we live with, and those we don't get to see as often these days. We hold a special prayer for moms and grandmas today.

We pray for those who have lost someone this year. We pray for comfort and hope for them.

We pray for those who are struggling with illness. We pray for healing for them.

We pray for teachers and students, especially those who are struggling with online teaching and learning.

We pray for health care workers, and for all the scientists, volunteers, and everyone who is helping us to get vaccinated.

We pray for our pets. We thank you for our dogs, cats, fish, and other pets. We thank you for bringing lost pets like Riley back home safely. And we pray for Dexter and Everest, and all pets who are sick.

We pray for the Marillac Place Project, and for all the young mothers that are helped through this project.

Dear God, we pray for ourselves, that we might see your love in the faces of others and share your love with those around us.

We ask all this in Jesus' name,
Amen

We Go to Share God's Love

SENDING HYMN *For the Beauty of the Earth* VU 226-Tune: Dix

1. For the beauty of the earth

For the glory of the skies

For the love which from our birth

Over and around us lies

Refrain God of all, to you we raise

This our hymn of grateful praise

2. For the beauty of each hour

Of the day and of the night

Hill and vale and tree and flower

Sun and moon and stars of light

Refrain

3. For the joy of human love

Brother, sister, parent, child

Friends on earth

And friends above

For all gentle thoughts and mild

Refrain

COMMISSIONING

Know that no matter what, you are good-enough.

Because it is not about you,

But about the Love of God flowing through you.

You are blessed to be a blessing,

May it be so, Amen

THE UCW BLESSING

And now go with us, God, into the days ahead.

Strengthen us for peace.

Give us wisdom. Keep us humble.

May we live and work together, and so striving,

build a new and better world for tomorrow. Amen

POSTLUDE

CREDITS

Participating in Today's Worship

Welcome and Announcements Greg Case, Worship Chair

Opening Prayer: Alice Beiman

Scripture & UCW Blessing: Marg Colmer-Shantz

Sermon: The Rev. Rose Ann Vita, Minister of Worship & Pastoral Care

Introduction to Marillac Place: Marilyn Gerriets

History of UCW: Cathie Stewart Savage

Vision of the UCW & In Memorium: Edith Coyle

Thanksgiving for Women & Prayer of the People: The Youth and Children of First United

Music Ministry

Director of Music Ministries: Kathleen King Martin

Family Choir: Lee Willingham, Eva Mezo-Willingham, Leah Mezo-Willingham, and Nora Mezo-Willingham

Prelude: Dasia Yuan

Duet: Dana Yuan and Daphne Lin

Sources

Call to Worship: Retrieved from <https://digitalsongsandhymns.com/songs/6396>

Opening Prayer: Adapted from *True Home: Call to Worship* by Carol Penner retrieved from <https://carolpenner.typepad.com/leadinginworship/2012/08/true-home-call-to-worship.html>

Scripture: *The Inclusive Bible* by Priests for Equality. Sheed & Ward, (pp. 1445-1446, and 2376).

Prayer of Dedication and The Gift of United Church Women: Adapted from the *UCW Handbook Constitution, Guidelines, Policies, and Resources for United Church Women*

Photograph of Hands on the Live Stream: Taken by Jan Baxter on a past trip to Ireland. The hands were carved in limestone in Shane Gilmore, and placed in May 2008, in front of Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral, in Ennis Ireland.

Videos: "Marillac Place" retrieved from

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxqaqZa8k6U&ab_channel=MarillacPlace and "Burning Candle" retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohWRsticyk&ab_channel=Engineer