



Camrose United Church  
& Pioneer Pastoral Charge  
Sunday May 16, 2021  
7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

**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.*

**Gathering Prayer**

This is the day that God has made.

**We will rejoice and be glad in it.**

Let us worship the One who turns our sorrow into joy.

**Our despair into hope.**

Our doubt into faith.

**Let us feel the wind of the Spirit refresh our lives.**

God, our source of light and life, you lead the way  
to courage, kindness, generosity, and love.

**You call us to be your people  
and to live in community with one another,  
always moving to a place of wholeness.**

Your love makes us whole.

Help us to receive your love with open hearts,  
so that we may become attuned to your will and way.

**Amen.**

**Psalm 1 (Common English Bible)**

- 1 The truly happy person  
doesn't follow wicked advice,  
doesn't stand on the road of sinners,  
and doesn't sit with the disrespectful.
- 2 Instead of doing those things,  
these persons love the Lord's Instruction,  
and they recite God's Instruction day and night!
- 3 They are like a tree replanted by streams of water,

which bears fruit at just the right time  
and whose leaves don't fade. Whatever they do succeeds.

- 4 That's not true for the wicked!  
They are like dust that the wind blows away.
- 5 And that's why the wicked will have  
no standing in the court of justice—  
neither will sinners  
in the assembly of the righteous.
- 6 The Lord is intimately acquainted  
with the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked is destroyed.

### ***Wondering...***

The Psalms are songs of faith. They are songs of praise, of longing, of lamentations, of sorrow, of happiness.

As I read this first Psalm, I think my reading was coloured by experiences in this tired and frustrated world. It sounded like competition. It sounded like a person creating tension ... 'we' and 'them.' It sounded like 'my choice is better than your choice' It sounded like 'God loves me more'

While we need to lament when life is tough, I don't think that this is meant to build up barriers, but to knock them down. I think God loves us all – the ones who follow rules, the ones who struggle to follow, the ones who choose not to follow – some of us may be more work than others.

I wonder... what did you hear in this Psalm?

### ***Prayer of Awareness and for God's Grace***

Holy One,

You ground us when we struggle, when we are hurt,  
when we lose our way.

**You offer us all that we need to choose well,  
to care well, to be well.**

We are grateful for your presence in our living.

Yet, we don't always see you.  
We don't see you in the ones  
who challenge us to make hard choices.

**We don't see you in the ones  
who suffer in silence, who are alone.**

We don't see you in the ones  
who make poor choices then ask for our forgiveness.

**We don't see you in the ones  
who ask for support, who are exhausted from giving,  
who need us to hear and respond with care.**

**Forgive us, God.**

Open our eyes to see you in the world.  
Shake us out of our complacency.  
May we see you in the weary, the injured,  
the tired, the hungry, the homeless.  
May your voice push us to bring  
your love into action in this hurting world.

**Amen**

### ***Words of Assurance***

Remember these words of assurance:  
God created us with the capacity to love as God loves.  
God is right beside us when we lose our way.  
God's love is greater than our doubts.  
God loves us.

**Thanks Be To God.**

### ***Scripture Reading(s):***

**Acts 1:15-17, 21-26** Common English Bible

15 During this time, the family of believers was a company of about one hundred twenty persons. Peter stood among them and said, 16 "Brothers and sisters, the scripture that the Holy Spirit announced beforehand through David had to be fulfilled. This was the scripture concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus. 17 This

happened even though he was one of us and received a share of this ministry.”

21 “Therefore, we must select one of those who have accompanied us during the whole time the Lord Jesus lived among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when Jesus was taken from us. This person must become along with us a witness to his resurrection.” 23 So they nominated two: Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias.

24 They prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s deepest thoughts and desires. Show us clearly which one you have chosen from among these two 25 to take the place of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas turned away to go to his own place.” 26 When they cast lots, the lot fell on Matthias. He was added to the eleven apostles.

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.**

### ***Message/Reflections:***

Last week our scripture reminded us of our tendency to create groups that separate and form community divisions that don’t benefit all people. We were challenged to break down walls and barriers that hold us apart from God’s children.

This week the Psalm spoke to me of a similar situation, and I admit that, once again, I found myself being reminded that our default is to create those “them” and “us” situations and that “us” is often in the position of power. But, right in the middle of this song of lament and hope, I hear the reminder that when we plant ourselves beside the living water of God’s love, when we accept God’s gifts and direction we can

and will do better, we will offer the care, compassion and love that is needed to make the world a better place.

What do we have to do to get our heads wrapped around that? How do we know where and how to plant ourselves and be the people who live God's Good News?

It is helpful to have folk who will lead us with integrity, who will help us to find the gifts and skills of all people and weave them together as a supportive network for those who need it.

In the Acts passage we see a team of leaders who recognized that they had a space that needed to be filled. Their work was to share God's message of caring and to challenge others to join in this new way of living together and one more voice was needed. They asked for suggestions of people who could do the task – who had the skills and the ability to join the leadership team that was caring for others.

We do that in the church. When we are looking for a leader to join the team of staff and volunteers to help share the message of hope and care of the church, we ask for applicants, for suggestions of those who might fit the team.

We create a group of trusted members to look at those who could quite possibly be qualified, who they feel will be a good addition to the leadership and the fabric of the church and will offer care, compassion and a message of love with our community, who as a Member of the United Church of Canada shares with us the goals of loving the world and all it's people.

In the scripture, the disciples drew lots (they may have flipped a coin, or thrown dice, or drawn straws). That wouldn't pass in today's United Church which does NOT encourage gambling! But in their moment, they felt that this was the way that God would guide their choice for them.

We tend not to simply choose by flipping coins (thank you for that!), instead we use our skills of communication and discernment to see if a person is the right fit.

Sometimes it doesn't work (see Judas for an example on that one) – sometimes it does and the team of leaders is enriched and encouraged by the addition of a new member.

We don't hear anything else about either Matthias or Justus. We don't know how Justus felt about not being 'chosen' or how Matthias felt about the responsibility of joining in the leadership team.

What we do know is that the work continued. Maybe Matthias was one of those quiet workers – sharing his gifts by supporting others. Maybe another opportunity opened up for Justus and he found a different way to support the leadership team and the people they were working with.

The Psalm reminds us that the work of creating a balanced world is important. It reminds us that we must be aware of the choices we can and should make.

The reading from Acts reminds us that we don't do this work alone and that we must have trustworthy and dedicated leaders to keep us on track.

How do we discern the will of God in these uncertain and challenging times? What systems and conversations do we have in place to help us?

From the song of the faithful that reminded us to make better choices, that lamented when choices were made that didn't follow God's love, we learn that we can do better.

We learn that we can choose to include, to care, to stand with God to offer nourishment and receive God's life-giving spirit.

From the actions of the disciples in choosing a new partner, we learn that we do better together. We do better when we trust God. We do better when we make decisions that will support a whole community and honour the skills of all those who are part of it.

In Camrose United Church we are looking for partners in faith. We are looking for partners to consider joining our Church Council. We are looking for partners to join in the phoning tree that offers words of caring and connection to our members each month. We are looking for partners on committees who will continue to care for our building, our justice work. We are looking for partners to share their skills in worship – as readers, as musicians.

We are looking to our community and wondering where God is sending us next... who are we missing? What do we need to choose to ensure that all God's people are included, cared for and looked after.

Let's not throw a dice ... that's a bit too risky for us ... instead let's listen for God's voice and follow it as we decide to plant ourselves firmly in the world as the love of God in the world.

***☩ Hymn: ♪ VU#584 Through the Heart of Every City.***

### ***Offering Invitation***

God calls us to engage in the world  
so that all of God's people may share in God's Love.  
God asks us to welcome and value all of God's creation.  
May we offer our best gifts of time and treasure  
to bring God's love alive through the church.

**Holy One,**

**We give you thanks for all that we have  
and all that we are.**

**May the gifts that we offer to your church,  
bring healing service to this hurting world.**

**Amen.**

**Offertory: ♪ VU#545 You Nourish Us**

***Pastoral Prayers of God's People for God's People***

God our Creator,

we give thanks that You offer us another day of life.

We give thanks for

that great cloud of witnesses that have gone before us,

and for those who join us on our faithful journey.

**May we see your presence in those who surround us,  
may we be your presence for those in need.**

We pray for those who have accepted  
the role of leadership in the world.

For those who knew what they were getting into  
and for those who didn't.

For those who take seriously the commitment  
to look after the people under their care.

For those who have forgotten that the power they wield  
is to be for the health and welfare of others.

**May they see your presence in the world.**

We pray for those who are the workers in the world.

Those who heal.

Those who protect.

Those who clean, and fix, and nurture.

Those who look for the holes and fill them.

Those who give so that others may be  
rescued, safe, and heard.

**May they be your presence in the world.**

We pray for the hurting and the sorrowing.

In these pandemic times that are

testing our ability to care for each other,

there are many places around the world

where people are ill or are dying

in unprecedented numbers.



We offer our prayers  
for all those who are ill for any reason.  
We offer our prayers  
for all those who are mourning the loss of loved ones.  
We need our faith and your love  
to give us strength to get through  
these painful and trying times.  
**May we experience your presence in our pain.**

**We pray for ourselves.**  
**May we see you in all of those around us.**  
**May we answer your call**  
**to care and be part of**  
**communities that lead in**  
**loving your world.**  
**May we see and be Your love**  
**moving the world toward**  
**a healthier, more caring way of living.**  
**Amen.**

### ***☞Blessing***

See the possibilities that God unfolds before us  
Hear the voice of God. Feel the love of God.  
Lifted by God's love  
Let us proclaim God's message of justice and grace  
Let us love deeply and show great care.  
Let go and be the love in God's world. **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: 🎵 VU#699 Living into Hope***

***Acknowledgements***

Seasons of the Spirit™ SeasonsFUSION Lent • Easter 2021  
Gathering. Lent • Easter 2021.



**Announcements**

**Camrose United Church**

Top Sacred News is published May 21<sup>st</sup>.

Please contact the office if you would like to be offer your  
skills for Council, for phoning people, for any of our  
committees.

[camroseunited@yahoo.ca](mailto:camroseunited@yahoo.ca)

780-672-2176

**Pioneer Pastoral Charge**

Bake Sale Table at Oyen Farmer's Market  
June 18<sup>th</sup>

Contact Jessie Battrum to get your baking in!  
403-664-2515

If you want to check Annual Reports  
they are available on our website.  
Or call Val at the office for a paper copy  
403-664-3987