



Camrose United Church

July 18, 2021

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

***Forgive Us God – Hand on Heart
Amen – Hands in prayer
Thanks be to God – Hands in Air***

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.

Land Acknowledgment

In the spirit of the living God, who reminds us to love all of God's people... we remember that... many of us have arrived at this place from other places, from distant shores. For some of us our families came here years ago, some of us arrived more recently. When settlers came, they were met by others who were already here, already knew these lands, already lived rich and full lives based on ancient and proud cultures.

This is the land we share:

"Camrose United Church is located on land encompassed by Treaty 6, that was a traditional meeting grounds, gathering place, and travelling route to the Cree, Assiniboine, Ojibwa/Saulteaux (So-toe)/Anishinaabe, Inuit, Blackfoot, Métis, Dene (De-nay) and Nakota Sioux (Sue).

We acknowledge all the many First Nations, Metis, and Inuit whose footsteps have marked these lands for centuries and, as Treaty people, we affirm our commitment to the principles and actions of reconciliation."

Call to Worship and prayer:

As we gather for worship today,
I invite us to look around and pay
attention to where we are.
Some of us are, once again,
sharing solitude and worship with God.
What an amazing thing.
Some of us are gathered on
God's grassy carpet outside Camrose United Church.
What an amazing thing.

Take a moment.
Acknowledge those who are with you with a smile,
with a wave of your hand,

We know, don't we,
that God is with us when we worship
in ones and twos, in groups and crowds
In our homes, in God's amazing creation

Let us pause, to open our hearts to
the spirit of the One who brings us together
and joins us in love
wherever we are.

♪Hymn: MV#14 Where two or three are gathered

Where two or three are gathered in my name,
I am there, I am there
Where two or three are gathered in my name,
I am there, I am there.

Prayer of awareness, for God's Grace

Holy God,

We are grateful for all that you give us,
for your constant presence
and daily gifts of support, guidance and love.

We do know that wherever we are,
you are with us.

Holy One,

We find ourselves on another twist in our journey.

Many of us are scared and confused
and relieved and excited.

There are times when you gift us
with new directions, new challenges
and we do not know what to do with them,
how to live into them with grace.

Forgive us, God. (*Hands on heart*)

We have reminded ourselves a lot lately
to care for each other,

We have been reminded that patience and faith
are necessary for us to succeed.

There are times when our uncertainty has proven us
sorely lacking in caring, patience and grace.

Forgive us, God. (*Hands on heart*)

Temper our relief with the knowledge that
there are those who are scared.

Temper our excitement with the knowledge that
there are those who are ill or ill-prepared for
the next change ahead.

God of all people, once again we ask for
your love, your guidance, your grace.

Amen. (*Hands in prayer*)

Words of Assurance

Remember the stories of faith that ground us.

Remember the grace that God has shown
the generations through the ages.

Remember that God has faith in us.

May we remember to have faith in God
with us in all ways and always.

Thanks be to God (*Hands in the air*)

Scripture

Ephesians 2:11-22. Common English Bible

The reconciliation of God's people

11 So remember that once you were Gentiles by physical descent, who were called "uncircumcised" by Jews who are physically circumcised. 12 At that time you were without Christ. You were aliens rather than citizens of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of God's promise. In this world you had no hope and no God. 13 But now, thanks to Christ Jesus, you who once were so far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 Christ is our peace. He made both Jews and Gentiles into one group. With his body, he broke down the barrier of hatred that divided us. 15 He canceled the detailed rules of the Law so that he could create one new person out of the two groups, making peace. 16 He reconciled them both as one body to God by the cross, which ended the hostility to God.

17 When he came, he announced the good news of peace to you who were far away from God and to those who were near. 18 We both have access to the Father through Christ by the one Spirit. 19 So now you are no longer strangers and aliens. Rather, you are fellow citizens with God's people, and

you belong to God's household. 20 As God's household, you are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. 21 The whole building is joined together in him, and it grows up into a temple that is dedicated to the Lord. 22 Christ is building you into a place where God lives through the Spirit.

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

New Revised Standard Version

30 The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. 31 He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32 And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. 33 Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. 34 As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. 54 When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, 55 and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. 56 And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

Scripture is our song for the journey, passed down from generation to generation, to guide and inspire.

**God asks us to be doers of the word
and not hearers only.**

Reflection: Without Walls

This week's scripture readings challenge us to see and be God's loving vision for healing, wholeness, and unity, providing a home to the homeless, healing for the sick and welcome to those considered outsiders.

The readings invite us to into deeper reflection on what an "all are acceptable and all are welcome" attitude means for the life of the church. They challenge us to look at the church through a lens of reconciliation and the breaking down of traditions that divide and diminish our people

"We're all in this together" has been a mantra spoken throughout our COVID experiences. It was, and is, meant to remind us that when we live in community, our decisions effect other people, have impacts that can be invisible in the moment, but damaging in the future.

For our COVID experience, "In this together" was true in the sense that we all shared the same vulnerability to the virus, and many found new ways of being community and connection. But, as the effects of the disease grew, the impact on the poor and most vulnerable was disproportionate to those with wealth and stability.

Sometimes what we envision is very different from the reality that we live.

As church, we have a vision of our role, a dedication to being action in the world. Having been through this COVID adventure together has taught us that we need to re-imagine our community, re-imagine how we need our building to service us, re-imagine what it means to truly be in this world "together". We are challenged to look at being 'church' through a different lens, one of reconciliation and the breaking down of traditions that divide and diminish God's people.

Ephesians 2 begins with the assumption that there is knowledge of what has gone before. “So remember once...” (v.11), is a reminder to consider what has already been said while reading what is to come. The community was reminded that God’s reconciling and unconditional love had been made known to them in Jesus the Christ.

In the time of this faith story, Christian communities throughout Asia Minor were finding their way. They included people from different backgrounds, and the old animosities and traditions that existed between them were hard to shift. There was an apparent hierarchy undermining the nature of the communities, with those from a Jewish tradition claiming superiority over the Gentiles by describing them “the uncircumcised.”—creating the idea that Gentiles didn’t quite measure up, didn’t qualify to be included in God’s covenant with God’s people.

The writer of Ephesians challenged this notion – Gentiles did not need to become Jews, as indeed Jews did not need to become Gentiles; in Christ, they were united as Jews and as Gentiles. All were welcome in the new order of the covenantal story between God and God’s people, and everyone was drawn into community together through the Spirit of peace.

In our world today, we are beginning a journey of finding our faithful way as those first Christian Communities were. Indigenous stories are being raised up to us again – and we know that we should have known and acknowledged those stories before now. We now know that Indigenous People never needed to ‘become white people’ because they were always part of God’s people, God’s community.

We need that 'before' knowledge, to guide us into a future together. We need to release the old attitudes, animosities and traditions that kept us apart. There should be no walls in God's world... God's covenant of love is with all of God's people.

The early church was called to build something new and unprecedented with Christ as the cornerstone. The church that was needed was one with a strange and unfamiliar architecture – with walls and divisions broken down, and two humanities reconciled into one.

This building would not be the same as the past, it would be a present time occurrence – something that must be done now and will be done into the future. Everyone and all things will be changed by what would be built.

The reading from Mark 6:30–34, 53–56 shows us how that building of the new church would look. Jesus responded with compassion to all when crowds rushed to be healed. Jesus recognized that need for space for those who needed to rest, but also the necessity to support the work of healing for those who needed that. This is what the church is to look like.

Where are we seeing the need for the church to rebuild it's self? Where can we offer the space for rest, for healing in this troubled world we are living in? Do we have old habits and traditions that are barriers to loving as Jesus loved? Where are the walls that we need to break down so that all of God's people are welcomed, respected and loved?.

On Sunday, July 18, some of us are gathering for worship outside of our familiar building. The walls that we see offer

us comfort... but with the knowledge that we now have of Indigenous folk who need space for healing, of COVID that does not respect walls, how will we respond and make these walls, the newly emerging church, a welcoming and safe place for all.

♪Hymn: God gives

Invitation to offering

Our Jesus story today says that he recognized when followers needed to rest and he had compassion for them. Even when people threatened to overwhelm him, he still gave what he could for their health and welfare.

May we, too, find ways to live that example of a compassionate and giving spirit.

May this church that we love find its life
In being the Christ that goes and gives
where it is needed the most.

Prayer of Dedication

**Sharing God,
again and again you give to us.
You guide us, you hold us,
you teach us and you love us.
In gratitude for all that you offer us,
we bring these gifts.
Bless them, we pray,
so that our caring will be felt around the earth.
Amen (*hands in prayer*)**

♪ **Hymn Love Can Build A Bridge.**

Words and Music: Daniel Charles Damon. © 2014 Hope Publishing Company.

Love can build a bridge,
love can build a bridge,
as we work, and pray, and give,
love can build a bridge.

Pastoral Prayers from God's People for God's People.

Holy God,
Giver of many gifts,
we recognize that we are but
one piece of a much larger picture of love,
that your gifts are continuous and widespread
around the world.

We see walls that hold us back.
We feel comfort being with boundaries that are familiar to us.
You see opportunities for us to grow in caring and faith.
You see space for us to meet new experiences.

Holy One,
We offer you our prayers today
for all those who have felt held back
for those who need to forge ahead
for those who are searching for the old familiar ways
for those who need new ways to hold them up

We offer you our prayers
For the sick and the weary
For the scared and the hurt
For the homeless and the hungry
For the lost and the found
For the grieving.

In the silence of our hearts,
we offer you the names of
our family, friends and neighbours
who we know need open hearts
to feel your love and support surround them.

We pray for ourselves,
that we will embrace the
gifts of accompaniment you offer us
and welcome the gifts you share with us.
May we share our skills of listening and respect
with all those you place on this journey with us.
Amen. (*hands in prayer*)

♪Hymn God Whose Giving Knows No Ending.

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Blessing/Sending Forth

As we move into God's world from wherever we are today,
let us look around and pay attention to where we are and
who we are sharing this place with.
Share a moment of gratitude with those who have
worshipped with you – a smile or a waving, welcoming hand.
Remember that God continues to be with us-
in our ones and twos and more.
Wherever we are, God is with us.
Thanks be to God. (*Hands in the Air*)

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: *Oh, Who Will Build the Church Now/***
Kanisa Litajengua *Words and Music: Kenyan worship chorus. © East Africa*
Annual Conference.

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Rev. Helen Reed, Diaconal Minister

Helen.reed9266@gmail.com

780-672-2176 (office)

403-664-9266 (cell)