

FIRST UNITED CHURCH
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Building Relationships. Living God's Transforming Love

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2021 - CORE VALUE: TRUST

WE ARE GATHERED FOR WORSHIP

Prelude

Acknowledgement of the Land

We acknowledge that the land on which First United Church, Waterloo, resides are the lands traditionally used by the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Neutral People. We also acknowledge the enduring presence and deep traditional knowledge, laws, and philosophies of the Indigenous Peoples with whom we share this land today. We are all treaty people with a responsibility to honour all our relations. May it be so.

Welcome

First United is a vibrant community in the heart of Uptown Waterloo. We love to welcome people of all ages and all backgrounds, both to our worship services and to the many events that are held in virtually and in our building.

Our purpose is "*Building Relationships, Living God's Transforming Love*". We live out our purpose through four areas of ministry: worship, faith formation and development, pastoral care, and outreach.

As part of living out our purpose as a faith community, First United is an Affirming Church, striving for the full inclusion of people who express their sexuality through all orientations and gender identities.

We hope that you feel welcome here today and that during this time of worship you experience God's transforming love.

Announcements

Lighting of the Christ Candle

In the shadows of life, Christ is our guiding light.
No matter where we are or what circumstances we find ourselves,
we are not alone. Christ travels with us and illumines our way.
May the Christ Candle be a sign of God's presence with us this day.
And always. Amen

1. God of the Bible, God in the Gospel,
hope seen in Jesus, hope yet to come,
you are our center, daylight or darkness,
freedom or prison, you are our home.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.

2. God in our struggles, God in our hunger,
suffering with us, taking our part,
still you empower us, mothering Spirit,
feeding, sustaining, from your own heart.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.

Opening Prayer

Some of us have come in person to this sanctuary,
others have arrived via the internet from their homes or cottages.
Some have traveled over pavement and roads,
others remain in sight of trees and rivers and lakes.

Wherever you have come from,
know that you have been gathered by God for worship.
You who are the Spirit's delight, an unfolding of God's creation.
You who might be coming with doubts, fears, hurts, or joys and celebration.

However, you have arrived in this time and place,
because you have accepted the invitation of God's Spirit,
may you also accept the gift of grace, given freely,
yours for the taking. Welcome to worship!

Opening Hymn

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

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

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

3 Children and elders middlers and teens
Singles and doubles and in-betweens
Strong eighty-fivers and streetwise sixteens
We are a part of the family

4 Greeters and shoppers longtime and new
Nobody here has a claim on a pew
And whether we're many or only a few
We are a part of the family

A Message for All Ages

WE ARE INSPIRED BY SCRIPTURE, SERMON, AND SONG

Music Ministry *On the Willows* *(an adaption of Psalm 137)*

Nehemiah (adapted from chapter 7 & 8 in The Message)

The people returned from the captivity of the Exile, the ones Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon had carried off captive; they came back to Jerusalem and Judah, each going to his own town. On the first day of the seventh month, they were settled in their towns.

Then they gathered as one in the town square in front of the Water Gate and they asked the scholar Ezra to bring the Book of Moses. So, Ezra the priest brought the Book of Moses to the congregation, which was made up men and women, everyone capable of understanding. Ezra read facing the town square at the Water Gate from early dawn until noon and all who heard, understood. All the people listened wholeheartedly.

The scholar Ezra stood on a wooden platform built for the occasion. He was surrounded by the leaders of the congregation. As Ezra read, everyone was able

to see him on the platform. When he opened the book, everyone stood. When Ezra praised God, all the people responded, "Amen! Amen!" with hands raised high and fell to their knees in worship of God with their faces to the ground.

The leaders of the congregation explained the sacred writings so the people could understand. They said to all the people, "This day is holy to God, your God. Do not mourn or weep." They said this because the people were weeping as they heard the words of the Book of Moses.

Then Ezra said, "Go home and prepare a feast, a holiday feast, rich food and sweet wine; and share it with those who don't have anything: This day is holy to God. The days of mourning are past. The joy of God is your strength!" So, the people went off to feast --- eating and drinking and including the poor in a great celebration.

* * *

On the second day of the month, the heads of the families, the priests, and the Levites gathered around Ezra for more instruction. In the Book of Moses was a command to live in booths during the festival of the seventh month. So, they announced to the congregation: "Go into the hills and collect olive branches, pine branches, myrtle branches, palm branches, and any other leafy branches to make booths. So, the people went out, brought in branches, and made themselves booths. The entire congregation that had come back from exile made booths and lived in them. This was a time of great joy. Ezra read from the Book of Moses each day---from the first to the last day—for seven days they celebrated the feast. And on the eighth day they held a solemn assembly in accordance with the instructions.

Sermon *Trust: Singing Our Song in a Foreign Land*

An Experience of Trust at First

Sermon Hymn *My Life Flows On*

VU 716, vs 1 & 2

1 My life flows on in endless song,
above earth's lamentation.
I hear the sweet, though far-off hymn
that hails a new creation.
Through all the tumult and the strife,
I hear that music ringing:
It finds an echo in my soul ---
How can I keep from singing?

2 What though my joys and comforts die?
My Saviour still is living.
What though the shadows gather 'round?
A new song Christ is giving.
No storm can shake my inmost calm,
while to that Rock I'm clinging:
Since Love commands both heaven and earth ---
How can I keep from singing?

WE GIVE FROM WHAT WE HAVE RECEIVED

Call for the Offering

Dedication Gracious God, accept our offerings. Bless our gifts that we have given.
whether they be monetary or offerings of ourselves stepping out in faith,
with our brokenness, our leftovers, our hope, and our being.
Bless and transform our gifts and all we offer --- and all that we hold back,
so that new life might abound to celebrate and honour your holy name. Amen.

Prayers of the People

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQ8ZrNz2Aol>

WE GO TO BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

Sending Hymn *By the Streams of Babylon*
(Tune: For the Beauty of the Earth)

1 By the streams of Babylon, we sit weeping bitter tears.
Here so many hopes are gone; now we're filled with countless fears.
Yet, O God, you tell us: "Rise! See the world through faith-filled eyes!"

2 We will rise and seek your way, knowing love will one day win.
We won't let fear rule the day; we will welcome strangers in.
Every day, we'll seek and find countless ways to be more kind.

3 By your grace, we'll rise above even in this troubled hour.
Where there's hate, we'll choose to love; we will speak your truth to power.
With the poor and refugee we will build community.

4 We will pray for those who lead even as we take a stand.
We will rise with those in need, seeking justice in the land.
We will learn and listen well from the truth that others tell.

5 We will rise and work for peace; we will treasure your good earth.
We will march, that wars may cease; we'll see every person's worth.
God, now give us faith-filled lives as we heed your call and rise.

Blessing Go now in peace,
knowing that wherever we go,
the Spirit of God has already been there before us.

Commissioning The time of worship is ended and so we return to our homes.
May we do so with the assurance that in this bewildering time,
God loves each one of us unconditionally.
The Spirit of God is our guiding light, pointing to the way of extreme compassion.
And sometimes God is mischievous and surprises us with abundant grace.
May it be so. Amen

Postlude

Credits

The Prayers are adapted from *Gathering 2021 Pentecost 2*.

Music Ministry: *On the Willows* (from *Godspell*) Songwriters: John Michael Tebelak / Stephen Laurence Schwartz

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