

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR SUNDAY, JUNE 6, 2021  
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST / UNION SUNDAY / PRIDE SUNDAY

*Due to copyright limitations, we are unable to print the words to the songs. However, our musicians have chosen music to fit the scriptures. We invite you to look up the words in your worship book and ponder them. If you do not have a worship book, ponder the words to one of your favourite hymns and listen for God's voice. Those who have internet may find the songs on YouTube.*

**QUOTE OF THE WEEK:**

*When you choose to follow Christ, you choose to be changed.  
~Ezra Taft Benson*

**BEFORE WE WORSHIP, WE REFLECT...**

*Cultural touchstones for demons vary from horror movies and terrifying agents of evil to more whimsical depictions, but for some of us the fear of demonic activity feels distant. A potentially more relatable way of thinking of demonic influence in our lives comes from Nadia Bolz-Weber's book Shameless: A Sexual Reformation (New York: Convergent Books, 2019). Bolz-Weber points out that the root of the Greek word daemon is da, which means "to divide" (p. 69). A demon, she writes, is "that which causes us to fracture, to become less whole." The opposite of the demonic is what Jesus offers: "so much love upon those who had become fractured that their neglected pieces returned to the center of their being" (pp. 69–70).*

**CALL TO WORSHIP** - written by Nancy C. Townley

In the times of trouble, when all seemed hopeless, I cried out to God.

**And the Lord heard my pleas and answered me.**

When I felt lost and alone, I looked for God.

**And God found me and brought me home.**

When my life was filled with joy and blessing, I danced and praised God.

**And God danced and rejoiced with me. Thanks be to God. Amen.**

**CHILDREN'S SONG** *Our God Is An Awesome God*

**CENTERING PRAYER**

All-powerful God, in Jesus Christ you turned death into life and defeat into victory. Increase our faith and trust in him, that we may triumph over all evil in the strength of the same Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

**A NEW CREED**

We are not alone; we live in God's world.

We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence, to live with respect in Creation, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

**CHILDREN'S CHAT**

Look what I have here! Cookie cutters! Have you ever helped make cookies? I could hardly wait for my mom to bake them so that my sisters and I could decorate them.

Now, what do you notice when you make cookies? True, you can have a full collection of cookie cutters – shapes, animals, Christmas themed cutters, Easter themed cutters, birthday themed cutters, there are so many out there! But what do you notice when you make cookies?

Jesus gives us a hint when, as he is speaking to a crowd, the people point out that his mother and brothers and sisters have come to take him home and he says to the crowd, “Anyone who does what God desires is my mother, sister and brother.” Did you figure it out?

When you make cookies, you roll out the dough until it is spread out and the right thickness. Then, you take your cookie cutters and cut out your cookies. So, all the cookies are cut from the same dough! That is what Jesus is saying! Since God creates all of us, we may look different, yet we all belong to God. We are ALL part of the same family – the family of God!! Which means that everyone is deserving of respect and kindness and love. Easy to say, not always easy to do. That is why we pray to Jesus to help us love others as he loves us.

I hope you never look at a cookie the same way again!

## **MISSION AND SERVICE TRANSFORMING LIVES 96 YEARS ON**

True or false: The United Church of Canada was formed in 1925 in part so the founding denominations—Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational—could combine their finances to do more mission work in Canada and around the world?

If you guessed true, you are right.

From the very beginning, our United Church was formed out of a desire to come together and serve others like Jesus did. Through Mission & Service, we have been helping to save and transform lives, inspire meaning and purpose, and build a better world for 96 years.

Today, we are as committed as ever. Together, we turn compassion into action every day.

How?

To put it simply, we help.

In Canada, we help people in need by supporting homeless shelters, food banks, soup kitchens, and refugee programs. We reach out to young people on campuses and through camping. We care for people who are sick or at the end of life by supporting addiction, mental health, and counselling services and hospice care.

Globally, we help people access clean water, food, and medical care. We support skills training and economic development. We help with peace-making and sustainable agriculture efforts. We provide disaster relief and advocate for the rights of those who all too often don't get a say, like children and migrant workers.

We also support opportunities for people to grow spiritually in all kinds of ways.

Locally, we subsidize theological schools and education/retreat centres. We support events that promote spiritual development and personal reflection. We inspire new and innovative ministries, and sustain communities of faith that are remote or in need. Globally, we support church organizations that work with theological schools, offering practical training in agriculture and health.

It's a win-win. We trust that when people are in tune with their meaning and purpose, they will naturally want to help change lives and make the world a better place for all.

*Thank you for your gifts through Mission & Service. Your support makes a world of difference.*

## **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

Almighty God, you are the source of all light. You divinely separated light from darkness so that we may have the beauty of the light of day. Dear Lord, illuminate this day and enlighten us as we seek to know you through your word. May we be led by your light so our hearts may be opened to your word. Amen.

## **READINGS AND PSALM**

### **First Reading: Genesis 3:8-15**

*Immediately after Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit, they hide from God. Neither takes responsibility for their sin, instead blaming each other, the snake, and even God. The curse on the snake was understood as a messianic prophecy by the early church, who associated Eve's "offspring" with Christ.*

<sup>8</sup>[Adam and Eve] heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.<sup>9</sup>But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” <sup>10</sup>He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” <sup>11</sup>He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” <sup>12</sup>The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.” <sup>13</sup>Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.” <sup>14</sup>The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. <sup>15</sup>I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; they will strike your head, and you will strike their heel.”

## **Psalm 130**

*Wait for the LORD, for with the LORD there is steadfast love. (Ps. 130:7)*

<sup>1</sup>Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;

<sup>2</sup>**O LORD, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.**

<sup>3</sup>If you were to keep watch over sins, O LORD, who could stand?

<sup>4</sup>**Yet with you is forgiveness, in order that you may be feared. R**

<sup>5</sup>I wait for you, O LORD; my soul waits; in your word is my hope.

<sup>6</sup>**My soul waits for the Lord more than those who keep watch for the morning, more than those who keep watch for the morning.**

<sup>7</sup>O Israel, wait for the LORD, for with the LORD there is steadfast love; with the LORD there is plenteous redemption.

<sup>8</sup>**For the LORD shall redeem Israel from all their sins. R**

## **Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:13--5:1**

*Life in the present is transitory and cannot compare with the eternal home God has prepared for us. So we do not despair no matter what life might bring because we know that as God raised Jesus from the dead, God promises to bring us into eternal life.*

<sup>13</sup>Just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—“I believed, and so I spoke”—we also believe, and so we speak, <sup>14</sup>because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. <sup>15</sup>Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

<sup>16</sup>So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup>For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, <sup>18</sup>because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

<sup>5:1</sup>For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

## **Gospel: Mark 3:20-35**

*In response to charges that he is possessed, Jesus wonders aloud how anyone who is demon-possessed can cast out demons. Those who do the will of God are possessed by the Holy Spirit, siblings of Christ.*

[Jesus went home;] <sup>20</sup>and the crowd came together again, so that [Jesus and the disciples] could not even eat. <sup>21</sup>When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.” <sup>22</sup>And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul, and

by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.”<sup>23</sup> And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? <sup>24</sup>If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup>And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. <sup>26</sup>And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. <sup>27</sup>But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

<sup>28</sup>“Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; <sup>29</sup>but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”—<sup>30</sup>for they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

<sup>31</sup>Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. <sup>32</sup>A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.” <sup>33</sup>And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” <sup>34</sup>And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>35</sup>Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

## **SERMON**

The time is somewhere between the year 65 A.D. and 75 A.D. The Romans have invaded Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple.

You are Jewish. You have been inspired to follow the teachings of Jesus and have joined the movement called The Way. You are part of the early Christian house churches that have sprung up to teach about Jesus and live in a community of faith. Your family have denounced you because you have turned your back to your Jewish roots. You have sacrificed everything to follow this Jesus.

Imagine your joy as you hear this particular story from the Good News According to Mark where Jesus states that anyone who does the will of God is his mother, sister and brother! You, who have given up everything, including your own family, hear that Jesus embraces you as kin! Suddenly, you are no longer alone! Everyone around you who is striving to live as Jesus taught is your family!

In this 21<sup>st</sup> Century we do not comprehend the joy the hearers of this Gospel would have experienced knowing that it was worth the sacrifice of giving up everything for Jesus! In a culture where family, loyalty, duty and the Jewish faith were paramount, to walk away from all that was to experience emotional and spiritual death. Since we live in a secular world it is difficult for me to find a modern equivalent to imagine such spiritual aloneness. Perhaps the reality of being a refugee, a victim of war, living in a camp with others who have lost everything, would be the closest in terms of emotional and spiritual trauma. Still, the majority of this world cannot relate.

Thanks to Jesus’ words, the definition of family expanded. Loyalty to God became greater than loyalty to blood. Caring for neighbour, bearing in mind that we also are another’s neighbour, expanding the circle of Christ’s love, became more important than immediate family. The world is suddenly bigger, yet more intimate, at the same time.

If any of you have gone for supper at Joey’s Seafood Restaurant on Meadowood Drive in Winnipeg, you may have noticed the artwork on the walls. One poster reads, “Remember... as far as anyone knows, we are a nice, normal family”.

I appreciate this story from scripture because it shows that Jesus’ own family was not a model of perfection. There appears to have been some family disagreement, if not disfunction, happening! If this is what normal means, I’m in!

Even though we are only in chapter 3, the crowds are once again following Jesus and hanging on to his words. He has healed so many, freed so many from demons, these folks want to be near Jesus, touch him, be touched by him. In response, Jesus is impassioned by their desire to learn more, their need for his good news, forgiveness and love. Jesus keeps proclaiming, the people’s need so great,

that he and his disciples don't have time to eat. The Scribes have been observing. They do not like Jesus' power to exorcise and heal. Perhaps there is some jealousy lurking deep under the surface. Whatever the reason, Jesus makes the Scribes uncomfortable, possibly even fearful, so they accuse Jesus of being possessed. Passion and possession are a far cry from each other yet both can get you into trouble. Passion because it is such a strong emotion that can lead some to act beyond rational thought. Possession because of the damage that a person can create under its power. However, if the Scribes have been paying attention, it is obvious that Jesus' passion is love and a desire for all to be free in body, mind and spirit and not demonic power.

Adding insult to injury is Jesus' family who are convinced that Jesus has gone mad. The family's rejection of Jesus here is echoed in John 7:5, where we read that his brothers do not believe in him.

Professor David Schnasa Jacobsen, Boston University School of Theology, writes the following: *Jesus' family, ..., is demonstrably worried that Jesus is out of his mind. Perhaps they are concerned that Jesus' Galilean ministry of healing, exorcisms, and controversial teaching looks nothing like nice, traditional familial values. Frankly, we as contemporary readers may feel similarly: Hallmark sells cards for Mother's Day and Father's Day, which sentimentally reinforce the familial order, but what greeting cards are suitable for a "Happy Exorcism" or "Wishing you all the best with your unclean spirit"? Jesus' apocalyptic teachings and actions just don't fit the traditional family.*

Yeah, about that...

As Jesus points out in his parable concerning the strong man and his house, Jesus has the power to bind Satan and overturn the power of the Scribes, Pharisees and anyone else with earthly power to oppress. Offended by his words as his family may be, Jesus' new definition of family offers freedom to those who have embraced the big picture of the Good News of Jesus and who have chosen to expand their own definition of family to include their sisters and brothers in Christ. Imagine what these words meant to the Christian Church of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century! These were words that offered inclusion, acceptance, strength and hope! These were words of God's love spoken through Jesus.

By no means is Jesus stating that he is against family by blood. Rather, Jesus is freeing others who, for whatever reason, have no family or who have lost family and offers them a place to belong.

I close with a meme that someone put on my Facebook page. For me, it encapsulates Jesus' words beautifully: "If your parents aren't accepting of your identity, I'm your mom now. Make sure you eat. Take your vitamins. Drink some water. I love you!"

And so does God...

## **HYMN OF THE MONTH MV 190 Laughter Lit The Stars Of Morning**

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Let us come before the triune God in prayer.

God of wholeness, we pray for believers all over the globe. Unify us in service of the gospel, that we may work together as beloved siblings to share your love with all. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

God of the cosmos, we pray for creation; the gardens, waterways and creatures near to us and diverse forms of life that remain unseen. Teach us to treat the natural world with reverence, seeking restoration when human divisions have caused harm to your beloved creation. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

God of all people, we pray for harmony among the nations. Cast out from us unclean spirits of greed and fear, that we may work in solidarity with one another for the common good. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

God of abundance, we pray for those who are oppressed or in any need. Encourage those who have begun to lose heart. Strengthen and renew us with your Spirit. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

God of righteousness, we pray for this holy house of worship. Set our gaze upon things eternal, that in thanksgiving for your mercy, we may extend grace to more and more people. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

God of compassion, extend your healing touch to our broken world. We pray especially for all of Canada's indigenous peoples. We grieve the deaths of 215 children who attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School. God, as your people, we have failed to recognize our family in Christ. Help us to move forward, working together to educate, to listen and to live together with mutual respect. Confront us, challenge us, purge us, so that hatred ceases and love reigns. LORD God, we raise up our family, friends and community members who are in need of your presence; Lil Schieman, Larry McCrady, Mike Froese, Brooke Alexiuk, Dwayne, Tracy Skoglund, Matthew Grossman, Lorraine & Walter Pokrant. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

God of the ages, in your goodness you have sent us faithful witnesses for every time and place. We give you thanks for those saints who now rest in your eternal mercy. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your abiding grace.

**Amen.**

**THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**SENDING SONG** VU 248 *When Long Before Time*

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Go into the world with assurance, hope and promise:

the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ rest upon you – and even unsettle you;

the love of God, creator and giver of life, embrace you – and even confront you;

and the presence of the Holy Spirit encourage you – and surprise you,

this day and all your days. Amen

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