

# MORRIS-ROSENFELD ECUMENICAL SHARED MINISTRY

## ORDER OF SERVICE FOR SUNDAY, JULY 9, 2023

### SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Due to copyright limitations, we are unable to print the words to many of 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 of one of your favourite hymns and listen for God's voice. Those who have the internet may find the songs on YouTube.

#### QUOTE OF THE WEEK

People become attached to their burdens sometimes more than the burdens are attached to them.

~George Bernard Shaw

#### BEFORE WE WORSHIP, WE REFLECT...

*The yoke ties together two beasts of burden. According to this image, Christians do not walk alone, but are tied to Christ and to one another.*

#### LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge we gather and worship on Treaty 1 Territory, the original lands of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation.

Creator of all life, as long as there is breath in our bodies, and minds that function, fill us with your love for all, that we take the time to learn about the horrors endured, past and present, of the indigenous peoples of Canada, and around the world; to listen to the stories of those who endured, and overcame; to repent our corporate sin and strive to be people who choose to make a difference. May our words not be false or idle, our intentions paving the way to complicity. May we, like Jesus, truly seek justice, equity and respect for all our relations. Amen.

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

Come and worship, all you who love and serve the Lord—

**outsiders and insiders,**

old-timers and new-comers,

**the young, old and the in-between.**

Come as you are, for this is God's house—a house of prayer for all people,

**and God welcomes each one who comes.**

**CHILDREN'S SONG:** WOV 673 I'm So Glad Jesus Lifted Me

#### CENTERING PRAYER

You are great, O God, and greatly to be praised. You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Grant that we may believe in you, call upon you, know you, and serve you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

#### MINUTE FOR MISSION: **Creating a World without Hate**

On June 6, not far from the oldest mosque in London, Ontario, a family of five out for a walk were deliberately run over by a truck. Three adults and one teenager were killed. A nine-year-old boy is the sole survivor. Police say the family was targeted because they are Muslim.

In a statement, The United Church of Canada condemned the horrific and hate-filled attack.

"Many people in the United Church are weeping alongside the extended families and friends of the family members who were killed and injured in this premeditated hate crime and are grieving the innocent lives lost in this abhorrent attack," the statement reads, acknowledging the fearfulness that some people in the Muslim community feel as a result.

Did you know that 322 anti-Muslim hate crimes were reported in Canada between 2013 and 2019? And that's just the crimes we know about.

Prejudice runs deep. A 2017 study published by the Angus Reid Institute states that almost half of all Canadians have an unfavourable view of Islam, a perception evident in attitudes toward religious clothing. While 88 percent of Canadians support a nun wearing a habit, just 32 percent approve of a person wearing the niqab.

Our United Church is deeply committed to working with Muslims and others for peace and justice. That's why your Mission & Service gifts help us as a church to develop statements and educational resources to combat prejudice and discrimination.

In 2006, for example, the church released the statement "That We May Know Each Other: United Church-Muslim Relations Today." It was preceded by an important study document with the same name designed to help church communities deepen loving relationships with our faith cousins. Similar study guides have been created to foster interfaith relationships, including Jewish and Hindu faiths (respectively, "Bearing Faithful Witness" and "Honouring the Divine in Each Other").

Education begins with us. Your Mission & Service gifts help raise awareness and understanding that in turn contributes to a more peaceful world. One where no one is harmed by the hatred of another. Where no more children have to grow up without their family.

In the words of former Moderator Richard Bott, "Let us use all that we have and all that we are to stand in the face of the evil that would allow and cause this crime of hatred. Even as one man has been arrested for his actions, let us uncover and work against the beliefs, the worldview, the racism and the hatred that supported his choice."

Amen.

Your gifts through Mission & Service help raise awareness and understanding that in turn contributes to a more peaceful world. Thank you.

### **CANADIAN LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF: Refugee resettlement: Walaa's story**

Even during a global pandemic, Lutheran churches across Canada haven't stopped providing refugees with a new home and caring community through our refugee sponsorship program.

While the pandemic has introduced delays and required all sorts of adaptations to the program, the enthusiasm of churches for this work has been incredible and encouraging!

In October, several congregations in Regina worked together to welcome Walaa with her husband Mohammad and young son Ameer, Syrians who had been living at the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. Walaa's need for resettlement was critical, as she lives with Type 1 diabetes and struggled to access medical care at the camp—and was also 24 weeks pregnant at the time of their flight!

The sponsorship group was able to arrange for a doctor via the International Organization for Migration to travel with Walaa, helping ensure a safe arrival for the whole family.

During her first month in Canada, Walaa required hospitalization three times, but improved significantly thanks to a new glucose monitor, antibiotics, and "because our entire Lutheran community prayed for her like crazy!" according to Meredith Cherland, chair of the sponsorship committee.

In the second month after arrival, as she has regained strength, Walaa has had time to add some personal touches to their apartment—with pink paper in the china cabinet and tiny cups for thick Syrian coffee—and little Ameer turned two. And on November 26, Walaa gave birth to beautiful baby Awsam, who is currently still in NICU but they're optimistic he'll be home soon.

Thanks doesn't even begin to cover it—but may God bless each of you across Canada who are part of providing new homes for those who have had to leave everything behind!

## CHILDREN'S CHAT



Jesus tells his disciples that his “yoke” is easy and his burden is light. The horses in the picture are joined with a yoke. The yoke goes around their necks and is attached to a harness. A yoke is placed on an animal to guide it. It also helps the pair of horses to pull together to move a load. It keeps them beside each other so that both horses pull the weight at the same time, sharing the burden. Yokes during Bible times would have been very heavy, so Jesus may have surprised his listeners when he called his yoke easy. The second picture is of a pastor’s stole. It goes around the neck and hangs down over the pastor’s

robe. It represents a yoke for the pastor who wears it. Sometimes we say the pastor takes on the yoke of Christ. The pastor takes on the weight of looking after the people in the congregation. The pastor is there to help a family when someone dies, to baptize, listen to people’s pain, be there for the person who needs help, give communion, announce forgiveness. Looking after a lot of people who are hurting, struggling, dying, grieving, can be hard some days for a pastor. As a pastor, my stole reminds me that I am yoked to Jesus, and Jesus will help me to help the people. Like the horses, I am part of a team. Jesus is pulling with me to get people through the hard times to where they are healed from their pain. Knowing that God is with me gives me strength. Knowing that Jesus is helping me does make the burden lighter. Thank you, Jesus!

## PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy God, Word made flesh, let us come to this word open to being surprised. Silence our agendas; banish our assumptions; cast out our casual detachment. Confound our expectations; clear the cobwebs from our ears; penetrate the corners of our hearts with this word. We know that you can, we pray that you will, and we wait with great anticipation. Amen.

## READINGS AND PSALM

### First Reading: Zechariah 9:9-12

*The coming messianic king will inaugurate an era of disarmament and prosperity. Because of God’s covenant with Israel, the people are designated as “prisoners of hope.”*

<sup>9</sup>Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

<sup>10</sup>*He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war-horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.*

<sup>11</sup>As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

<sup>12</sup>*Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double.*

### Psalm 145:8-14

<sup>8</sup>The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

<sup>9</sup>**LORD, you are good to all, and your compassion is over all your works.**

<sup>10</sup>All your works shall praise you, O LORD, and your faithful ones shall bless you.

<sup>11</sup>**They shall tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your power,**

<sup>12</sup>that all people may know of your power and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

<sup>13</sup>Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; your dominion endures throughout all ages. You, LORD, are faithful in all your words, and loving in all your works.

<sup>14</sup>The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up those who are bowed down.

### **Second Reading: Romans 7:15-25a**

*Life captive to sin is a catch-22 existence in which we know good but do not do it and do things we know to be wrong. Through Jesus Christ, God has set us free from such a futile existence.*

<sup>15</sup>I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. <sup>16</sup>Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup>But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. <sup>18</sup>For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. <sup>19</sup>For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. <sup>20</sup>Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

<sup>21</sup>So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. <sup>22</sup>For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, <sup>23</sup>but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. <sup>24</sup>Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? <sup>25a</sup>Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

### **Gospel: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30**

*Jesus chides people who find fault with both his ministry and that of John the Baptist. He thanks God that wisdom and intelligence are not needed to receive what God has to offer.*

[Jesus spoke to the crowd saying:] <sup>16</sup>“To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

<sup>17</sup>‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’

<sup>18</sup>For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; <sup>19</sup>the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

<sup>25</sup>At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; <sup>26</sup>yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. <sup>27</sup>All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

<sup>28</sup>“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

**HYMN:** WOV 734 Softy And Tenderly Jesus Is Calling

**SERMON:** from the MNO Synod Summer Sermon Series.

**Rev. Doug Reble, Assistant to the Bishop, Eastern Synod**

In the name of the God who loves us all, grace to you and peace.

So, I have some questions for you. What I will call questions for the “average person.” That’s you and me, by the way. First, which is more important, making money or being devoted to your family? Ask the average person that question and virtually everyone will answer, “Family” without hesitation. But watch how the average person often lives life. See where they really invest time and energy and they will give away the fact that we do not always live by what we say we believe. They have become persuaded that if they leave for work earlier in the morning and come home tired at night, they are proving how devoted they are to the family by expending all that time and effort to provide them with all the things they need or want.

An ancient story is told of a king who was suffering from a certain ailment and who was advised by his astrologer that he would be cured if the shirt of a contented man were brought to him to wear. People

went to all parts of the kingdom looking for such a person and after a long search they found a man who was really happy. But he did not possess a shirt.

Another question. Which means more, the approval of strangers or the affection of people closest to you? Ask the average person, you and me, which means more, and they will not be able to understand why you would ask such a dumb question. Obviously, nothing means more to them than the affection of their family and closest friends. Yet, how often have we embarrassed our children or squelched their spontaneity, for fear of what neighbours or strangers might think? How often have we poured out our anger or displeasure on those closest to us because we had a hard day at work or someone else did something to upset us? A little more humorous example perhaps though with some truth, how many of us have let ourselves become irritable with our families because we are dieting to make ourselves look more attractive to people who do not know us well enough to see beyond appearances?

One more question. What does the average person want out of life? The average person will probably reply, "All I want is to be happy" and you know what, I believe that. I believe that most people want to be happy. I believe that we work hard at making ourselves happy. We buy books, attend classes, and change our lifestyles, in an ongoing effort to find that elusive quality – happiness. In spite of all that, I suspect that many people, much of the time, do not feel happy. As Henry David Thoreau said over one hundred and fifty years ago, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation."

Oscar Wilde wrote a few years after Thoreau, "In this world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants and the other is getting it." He was trying to warn us that no matter how hard we work at being successful, success will not satisfy us. By the time we get there, having sacrificed so much on the altar of being successful, we will realize that success is not what we wanted."

An anonymous friar in a monastery wrote these words about twenty years ago or so. "If I had my life to live over again, I'd try to make more mistakes next time. I would relax, I would limber up, I would be sillier than I have been. I know of very few things I would take seriously. I would take more trips. I would climb more mountains, swim more rivers, and watch more sunsets. I would do more walking and looking. I would eat more ice cream and less beans. I would have more actual troubles and fewer imaginary ones. You see, I'm one of those people who have lived life sensibly, hour after hour, day after day. Oh, I've had my moments, and if I had to do it over again, I'd have more of them. In fact, I'd try to have nothing else, just moments, one after another, instead of living so many years ahead each day. I've been one of those people who never go anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a gargle, a raincoat, aspirin, and a parachute. If I had to do it over again, I would go places, do things, and travel lighter than I have. If I had to live my life over again, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would play hockey more. I wouldn't make such good grades, except by accident. I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I'd pick more daisies."

Friends, if you asked the average person, "If you had your life to live over again, what would you do differently? What do you think they would say? What would you say? What would I say? By now you've figured out this is not a biblical exegetical sermon; I'll leave that for the bishops in this summer series. So here is one more vignette to reflect on. And then I will let Jesus have the last word.

There is an old Peanuts cartoon. Snoopy is sitting on top of his doghouse when Charlie Brown comes with a note. Charlie says, "It's a letter from your brother Spike." "Dear Snoopy, something wonderful happened, a man came by here and offered to sell me a magic cape. He told me that if I wore this magic cape, I would be transported to a land of paradise. He said the cape was on sale, so not wanting to miss such a bargain, I gave him my only dollar."

The next panel shows Spike spending his time in the desert contemplating the meaning of life. Then we switch back to Charlie reading to Snoopy. "So, by the time you get this letter, I'll be living in paradise." Then Spike is pictured again on the desert floor among the cacti, cape draped over his shoulders saying, "Then again, maybe I've been had."

My dear friends in Christ. In this life that we have, too many people have been had. Me, too, at times. There are no magic capes. There is no one key that will guarantee happiness. In fact, that old saying about death and taxes being the only things we can count on would seem to ensure unhappiness. Ask the average person and you will hear that we live in a messed-up world, a world where people fly planes into buildings, where adults sometimes do unspeakable things to children, a world where unspeakable horrors occur every day all over the world.

There will always be low times. In fact, there will be times you get so far down that you cannot remember up. When those times come, remember this. You are not alone. You've got a friend, one whom scripture says sticks closer than a brother. Jesus. Whom we call the Christ. The same Jesus who issues an invitation in today's gospel reading, an invitation that reaches down to us no matter how deep we are. This is what Jesus says: "Come to me, all you that are weary. All who are carrying heavy burdens, guilt, pain, despair. All that keeps you from being happy. Come, and I will give you rest."

In the name of the God who loves us all. Amen.

**HYMN:** VU 626 I Heard The Voice Of Jesus Say

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Confident that God receives our joys and concerns, let us offer our prayers for the church, those in need, and all of creation.

God of the covenant, you call ministers to proclaim your gospel of grace throughout the world. Inspire pastors, deacons, church musicians, and all ministers of your word as they carry out your work. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of all creation, you reveal your goodness through all you have made: rivers and seas, plants and animals, and endangered species. Prosper the work of conservation organizations, botanical gardens, zoos, and wildlife sanctuaries. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of the nations, you desire that all the peoples of the world live in peace. Guide government leaders at all levels—national, state/province, and local—to work for justice, mercy, and reconciliation. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of compassion, you bring healing to those who are sick, consolation to those who are grieving, and well-being to those who are distraught. Send skilled caregivers to all in need, and make your presence known among all who suffer. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of rejoicing, you have brought us together this day to worship around word and sacrament. Encourage children in their learning and growing, and watch over those who are absent today. Lead us all to places of renewal and refreshment. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of all faithfulness, through the witness of the faithful departed you reveal love in action. Embolden us by their example to build up the beloved community in all the contexts we encounter. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, in the name of the one who reconciled all creation to himself, Jesus Christ our Savior.

**Amen.**

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**SENDING SONG:** VU 658 O Love That Will Not Let Me Go

### **BENEDICTION**

The God who calls across the cosmos and speaks in the smallest seed † bless, keep, and sustain you now and to the end of the age. Amen.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**PASTOR LESLIE is on holiday. She returns on Saturday August 5<sup>th</sup>. Should you require pastoral care during her absence, please contact Debbie Swift who will put you in touch with the emergency clergy.**

**REMINDER: THE CHURCH WILL BE CLOSED FOR THE MONTH OF JULY. WE WILL RESUME WORSHIP ON SUNDAY, AUGUST 13<sup>TH</sup>**

**The online worship services will be posted on the Morris United Church website throughout July.**

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