



**Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge of the United Church At
Home Worship
Sunday August 2, 2020**



Minister: Rev. Tammy Allan

Your Worship Space

As we continue our time apart, due to restrictions related to the pandemic, we offer to you this service of worship, for your use personally, and with your friends and family. You are welcome to share it with others.

This week, David is enjoying a time of Sabbath, so so there will be no recorded service posted on the FaceBook group Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge for Sunday, August 2. We invite you to enjoy this printed resource, and if you like, to go to our website, where you will find a listing of other pastoral charges in the Chinook Winds Region that are offering on line worship.

Try to create a special space for your time of worship. It could be as simple as lighting a candle (either flame or battery); or placing a small cross or a symbol that has meaning for you in front of you.

If you are alone, perhaps start a journal, as you reflect on the worship experience. Or, perhaps call a friend and share this time with them over the phone. If you are with one or two others, enjoy the conversation that arises...as you practise safe distancing. For interest, and further reflection, consider seeking out another church's offerings and how their message speaks to you, as well. You will find a listing of other churches within Chinook Winds Region that are offering online worship on our website www.oldsunited.ca or www.sundreunited.ca

As we worship we gratefully acknowledge that we are on the ancient and traditional lands of The Blackfoot Nation, the people of the Treaty 7, and of Metis Region 3.

*May we cherish and care for these lands and the people,
just as those who came before us did.*

Opening Call

As people of God, we praise the one who so delighted in creating us.
Let us delight in the community of which we are a part, and the warm love that is all around us.
Let us feel the embrace of the Spirit as we worship – together, while apart, this day, and always.

Prayer

God of dreams and visions, we enter into moments of stillness and feel your presence. Through relationships



– with you and others – we know that you are constantly with us. We thank you for your many gifts to us, especially for the gift of being named, known and loved by you. May we know your presence among us as we worship today. Amen.

Reading for today

Matthew 14:13-21

This well known story of Jesus feeding the 5000 shows his compassion as he insists that the crowds that have gathered to see him get fed. We know the story – it is about God’s abundance.

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. ¹⁵When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” ¹⁶Jesus said to them, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” ¹⁷They replied, “We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.” ¹⁸And he said, “Bring them here to me.” ¹⁹Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. ²¹And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.



A Message for Today

Today’s passage emerges following a time of struggle or conflict. Jesus intentionally takes time apart to reflect, perhaps to prepare for what might lie ahead. How many of us need to do that sometimes...to remove ourselves from the day to day, or even from the moment, to step away, alone, and figure it out. Perhaps make some decisions, or just simply get straight with God.

Perhaps that was what was happening in the gospel story today. Background here – Jesus had just learned of his cousin John the Baptist’s death - murder actually - at the order of King Herod. No doubt saddened, perhaps even angered by this great loss, Jesus goes to that deserted place to be alone, to grieve, and perhaps to struggle with his feelings.

Yet crowds of people learn of Jesus' presence, and follow him to this deserted place. These people wouldn't have been the elite, the powerful – they wouldn't have ventured beyond the comforts of their wealth.

These crowds would have been the everyday, ordinary folk, those who followed Jesus because they had heard of his gifts of healing...they came seeking hope and grace. In spite of Jesus' own pain, in spite of his own need to heal, he had compassion on these crowds of people, and reached out to them, caring for them, and offering them healing love.

When evening came to this deserted place, and people's need for food became clear, the disciples suggested that these crowds leave and go buy food. These weren't people, historians tell us, that would have had the means to do that. Besides, they would have been tired, and hungry...there would have been all ages among them...food was something they needed – but the disciples found nothing but 5 loaves and a couple of fish among the whole crowd.

Asking Jesus to send the crowds away brought an unexpected response- he turned the task of feeding the all those people back on the disciples, who were clearly doubtful that the meager rations they had found would be enough.

Perhaps that where faith comes in, faith in the grace of God, and the power of thanksgiving. For Jesus blessed the food before sharing it...and not only was there enough, there were leftovers.

Theologian David Lose writes:

“while we may debate whether Jesus suspended the natural order to feed the five thousand or whether his example merely prompted the crowd to share what it already had, these just weren't the concerns of the earliest Christians.”

Lose goes on to write of the two miracles he finds in this story....

“the point isn't *what* Jesus does, but *why*. Because the character of the God Jesus reveals and represents is captured in a single word, “compassion.” Matthew says that when Jesus saw the great crowd that had followed him he had compassion on them. And so he healed their sick, tended their needs, and shared with them his presence. And then, when evening came and they found themselves without food, he fed them.”

Lose also reminds us of the context of this whole scene. It begins with Jesus, in mourning by himself and moves to him being yet again surrounded by people who need him. As Lose writes:

“The juxtaposition couldn’t be more ironic, or powerful. One moment Matthew invites us to focus on one more episode from the “lifestyles of the rich and shameless” and in the next he fastens our attention on a scene portraying poor, sick, and hungry crowds looking for relief. It’s like switching channels from the Kardashians to a news report on immigrant children stranded at the border. Matthew is indicating by these contrasting scenes just what kind of God Jesus represents.

In the first century, you see, gods aren’t normally supposed to care about people like the crowds. The gods of the ancient philosophers, for instance, were considered dispassionate...

At the other end of the spectrum, the gods of the Greek and Roman empires were notorious for using humans as playthings and for ordering the world to their whims. At best, gods were supposed to take the side of the rich and powerful, to stand with people like Herod and his well-fed party guests, sanctioning their exploitation of the poor and even the bloody murder of a truth-teller like John. They were definitely *not* known for siding with the oppressed, the ordinary, the downtrodden, or the hungry.”

And that’s where we find the second miracle, says Lose – in the change of attitude from one of scarcity to one of abundance. With a few loaves of bread and couple of fish, and a blessing upon them – there is enough for all, and then some.

Food scarcity was as much an issue of rich verses poor in that time in history as it is now. In order for there to be enough for all, those who *have* need to respond to the call to share. And that’s what happened that day, on that deserted beach. Initially, there were just a few loaves and a couple of fish. For that’s all that was produced when the disciples went looking...but then, with Jesus’ blessing upon the food – there was a bounty.

Could it be that this was the first church pot luck? Or perhaps the origin of my grandma Allan’s adage – we can always find another bean for the pot. For she too knew what poverty was, and what it was to try and feed 10 people everyday...and often find a few extras at the door who were hungry too. My dad tells me that especially during those depression years, drifters and people in need often found their way to my grandparents’ doorstep, and always, my grandmother managed to make a meal stretch to feed a few more than just her own crew of 10.

Could it be that those kinds of miracles still occur today, those miracles of compassion and abundance?

They sure do, every time someone reaches out to another in need. When a young person chooses to work for less than grandiose wages, in preference for a career that is about caring for the disadvantaged or the disabled – a miracle happens.

When a neighbour helps a senior, doing things that make staying in their home more feasible, or just checking in to help ease the isolation that has come with COVID restrictions, a miracle happens.

When a gentle man waits on the side of the highway with a woman whose car has broken down, so that she feels safe while she waits for a tow truck, a miracle happens.

When a community supports families who are struggling through a time of crisis, a miracle happens.

Miracles of compassion. God at work in the world. Through people like you and I.

God is indeed at work, in you and me, and all kinds of people, who compassionately care and abundantly share. For that is what discipleship is about. Thanks be. Amen.

Quotes come from David Lose davidlose.net Pentecost 8A: “The Real Miracles of the Story”

Hymn For the Crowd of Thousands
(recording from Tsawwassen United Church)
<https://youtu.be/doyjQJ1vBe8>

This Week’s Minute for Mission

Committing to a more accessible and barrier-free church



Published on:
April 13, 2020

The United Church of Christ USA is a full communion partner of The United Church of Canada. Every few years, it organizes a national conference called

Widening the Welcome (WtW) jointly hosted by its Disabilities Ministries and Mental Health Network. The conference is one way for the church to become more accessible. The event is packed with speakers, worship, workshops, and networking opportunities.

For the WtW conference in November 2018, The United Church of Canada sent a small delegation of people with disabilities, and their allies. They were all committed to the United Church's desire to become a more open, accessible, and barrier-free church where people with disabilities can fully participate in all areas of the church's life.

The United Church of Canada offered financial support for people to attend the conference, which was possible through Mission & Service. Some delegates would not have been able to attend without this support.

The delegates found the conference an amazing learning experience and came back from it transformed and even more passionate about disability ministries.

One of them said, "I came back with strong enthusiasm to share this knowledge with my church and promote accessibility in The United Church of Canada."

Moved by the conference, other delegates have created and led worship and offered educational sessions in their own ministry contexts. Through Mission & Service, people of The United Church of Canada have been inspired to make the church even more open, accessible, and barrier-free for all!

If Mission & Service giving is already a regular part of your life, thank you so much! If you have not given, please join me in making Mission & Service giving a regular part of your life of faith. Loving our neighbour is at the heart of our Mission & Service.

For more Minutes for Mission resources, see our [photo collection](#) and [video playlist](#).

Find out what the United Church is doing and what you can do to [widen the welcome for people with disabilities](#).

Prayers for this day

God of compassion, God of abundance, as we pray for the world and all that dwell in it, we grasp hold of each other, knowing that strength comes from

community and from faith. We know that as we join in prayer together, even as we are apart from one another in worship, we find an opportunity to encounter you, among us.

For those in our world who struggle to find a safe home, we pray. For those who wrestle with illness or worry, we pray. For those who struggle to gain an education, and those who find it a challenge to find meaningful work, we pray.

For those who do not have access to safe, potable water, or enough to eat, we pray. For those for whom COVID 19 has created undue stress or financial hardship, we pray.

For those in our world who live in conflict, here at home, or abroad, we pray.

God of grace and love, in this time of summer Sabbath, for safety for people who are travelling and enjoying vacation times with family and friends, we pray.

God of love, we take a moment of silence to lift up our silent prayers...

May we know your presence among us as we pray the words that Jesus taught to his disciples ...



Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

Hymn All Things Bright and Beautiful <https://youtu.be/iUnQMvwaXlc>

A Blessing for Today

May the love that brought us into being fill us with hope. May the peace that passes understanding be upon us all. May the joy that lives where justice is be alive in each and every one of us. Amen.

Thank you so much for using this worship resource! Feel free to share it! You will also find reflective posts on our Facebook Group – Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge. Feel free to invite others to join that group.

This week, David is enjoying a time of Sabbath, so so there will be no recorded service posted on the FaceBook group Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge for Sunday, August 2. We invite you to enjoy this printed resource, and if you like, to go to our website, where you will find a listing of other pastoral charges in the Chinook Winds Region that are offering on line worship.

We are grateful for your connection to the Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge, and to both Olds and Sundre United Churches. As the time of COVID 19 social distancing progresses, know that we are still the United Church in our communities, striving to serve you and the community. Our ability to do that requires financial support, and we are so very grateful for those who are able to continue to support us in these challenging times. We also are aware for some, this time of pandemic has created hardship, and we pray for peace and hope.

If you already give to the church with PAR (Pre-Authorized Giving) things will carry on as usual, unless you need to make a change. If you give through envelopes, it would be greatly appreciated if you would mail your offering in, or bring it to the office, however please call first to confirm someone is there, as in these days our staff must be cautious as well.

And finally, if you are not a regular giver, but wish to support our ministries, we would gratefully accept your gift. Our church mailing addresses are:

Olds United Church 4810 50th Street, Olds AB. T4H 1E4

and

Sundre United Church Box 614 118 Centre Street North, Sundre AB. T0M 1X0