



**Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge of the United Church At
Home Worship
Sunday August 30, 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. **Due to technical difficulties, there will NOT be a recorded version of this week's service on our Facebook group, Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge.***

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. I sometimes like to sit by a window, so I can look out on the garden, and on nice days, I sit on my deck for my worship time.

You might want to write in 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

In the quiet of this moment, there is blessing for this day. The embracing love of God reaches toward us with joy, for we are part of the family of God. May we worship confident in the knowledge that God is with us always, and in all ways.

Prayer

O God, your spark is here, your flame burns amidst us. We know that we stand on holy ground, for all creation is holy, and all who abide within creation are called to do so with awareness and care. Help us to be attentive to your presence all around us, and to walk on your holy ground with humility and grace. Amen.

Special Music Here I Am, Lord Download Here:
<https://youtu.be/FWd6H1CQcxM>

Reading for today Exodus 3:1-15, New Revised Standard Version

Moses at the Burning Bush

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. ³ Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." ⁴ When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹ The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." ¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" ¹² He said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain."

The Divine Name Revealed

¹³ But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I am who I am."^[a] He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I am has sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The Lord,^[b] the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.

A Message for Today

Every 3 years, we move through a cycle in the lectionary. Every 3 years, we repeat the cycle from 3 years previous, and 6 years, and so on. This fall, as I approach the readings for this season, I have decided to focus on the Hebrew scriptures readings...instead of my usual focus on the gospel, and the Christian

Scriptures. After 24 years of preaching...4 as a student and 20 since commissioning to Diaconal Ministry, you have to switch it up a little. And besides, I think the Exodus stories can really speak to us in this time we are living in now, that can feel like an exodus in it's own right.

Today's story is one that many of us know quite well – even our children have become familiar with it, thanks to the Dreamworks Cinema's film "Prince of Egypt." The story today is about call, about responding to God's invitation to serve the people, and God. It's also about saying "Yes" to that invitation, in spite of hesitation or fear.

The passage begins with that burning bush experience for Moses, and hearing God tell him that he was standing on holy ground, that he should take off his shoes. Was that about being more grounded, more connected to God's earth, to creation? And therefore more open to listening God's voice?

As you are reading this...pause for a moment...and think about the places that for you are "holy ground places." Where do you feel closest to God? Where is your holy ground?
(this might be something you write in your journal about, or if you're inclined, to draw or paint or sculpt...)

Holy ground. For many, it's within the walls of a place of worship. Yet, in these days, how we connect with that holy space is certainly limited, and even when we return in a couple of weeks...what once made it holy will have changed...as we won't be able to be in that space in the same way we were before.

How have you found place for Spirit, for connection to the Holy One, for your soul to be grounded, since COVID?

For me, there have been a few ways, depending on what my soul is needing. Music tops the list. I find I am listening to music more, playing my piano a bit more, sharing music with others more. Conversation, and connection with people – whether that's over the phone, or socially distant in person, or over ZOOM or FACETIME...good conversation with people I care about has fed my soul. Some of that has been in my work, as I connect with people from our churches; some has been with family and friends. Some of that connection has grown through the Chinook Winds Regional staff realizing that we as clergy are walking such new roads through this time that connecting and supporting one another has been vitally important. To that end, they have created "Town Hall" meetings over ZOOM for us to do that connecting. That's been one of the unexpected gifts of COVID. When we lost our presbyterys, we all feared that we would lose connection with colleagues and lay representatives from congregations in our area. What those Town Hall gatherings have done is not only helped us maintain connection, but they have

also helped us get to know the folks from the other presbyterys that have all become part of the larger Chinook Winds Region.

As a card carrying extrovert, those connections have been valuable “holy ground” for me.

I know too, though that there have been times in this journey through COVID that I have needed to take time for the introvert part of me that often gets neglected. Sometimes that introverted “holy ground” I’ve needed has been in the car, as I drive from here to see my dad. There’s usually music as I drive, and that is good thinking ground for me. There is also the time I spend at home, when the house is quiet, in the late evening...and I take time to reflect and pray on the day. (I am NOT a morning person...my introvert likes late night reflection). Sometimes, that introvert part of me gets nurtured in the office, when no one else is around, as I read and prepare worship.

Another important place for me to nurture my soul is in the mountains. Some of you have heard me say it before...there’s something about the grandeur, and the solid presence, that gives me a sense of being close to God.

That place where you feel closest to God – in Celtic Spirituality, that is known as a thin place. My prayer is that you have found a thin place, a holy place, and that you are able to visit it often enough to feed your soul.

I think it goes without question that being in the presence of God’s voice, and that burning bush would have made that a forever thin place for Moses. That burning bush image can be found on our own United Church crest, representing our Presbyterian roots, and the indestructability of the church. It’s an image I think we need to keep in mind, in that even in these times when “church” and how we live out our faith is so different, the church will also have a place, be a place. The place is not about the building necessarily – but the people. We will always be the church, even when we cannot gather in the same space; even when we do gather, and things look and feel very different. We are the church...where 2 or more are gathered...even if that’s over a phone line, or a computer connection, or a hand written note. We are part of God’s community, part of the body of Christ.

When God called upon Moses to be a leader for the people, Moses at first responded with that almost sarcastic comment “Who am I that I should go...?” Sarcastic, and perhaps self-doubting. What he received in return was an assurance from God that God would be with him.

As we go about our day to day, when we encounter situations that we see need someone to stand up and speak out – is it possible that God is calling out to us, to respond to that need? We may have a moment of asking “Who I am to go...?” We may even have some level of self-doubt. Yet, I believe that when God calls, God sees something in us that we may not recognize in ourselves...yet. And I believe, if we can trust that we are not alone, we may find the inspiration to act, to respond with a “Yes” to God. In fact, I’ve seen it happen...more than you’d

think, on my journey of ministry with the people I have served. I've seen it happen even in this time of "exile" from our church buildings. We are not alone. God is with us on this journey, just as God has always been.

As I consider the months we've journeyed through this year, and the days and weeks (and perhaps months) to come, I imagine that if we combined the yes's that are occurring in our midst, so that we are acting in community, all manner of wonderful things can happen. In fact, they already are, through faith and trust in the God that is indeed always with us. Who are we to go...? We are God's people, and God needs us to be part of the story. Thanks be. Amen.

Special Music Who Am I - Linnea Good download here:
<https://youtu.be/acWqrA5sdtM>

This Week's Minute for Mission

Reimagined event draws the circle wider.



Dr. James Makokis is a proud Cree from the Saddle Lake First Nation in northern Alberta and a physician. He was a keynote speaker at Rendez-vous 2020.

Credit:

Speakers Bureau of Canada

Published on:
August 24, 2020

Rendez-vous 2020, the United Church's national youth and young adult gathering, was an event like no other—just as 2020 has been a year like no other.

In late April, the Rendez-vous design team decided there couldn't be a large gathering in Calgary because of COVID-19. Plans that had been in the works for over a year were scrapped, disappointment reigned, and there was wavering about whether to postpone to 2021, cancel completely, or reimagine. After anxious conversations, disagreements, and a few tears, the decision was made to reimagine Rendez-vous 2020 as an online event.

The team wanted young people to know that the church understood all they were missing, cared for them even if we couldn't be with them in person, and wanted to bless them.

Rendez-vous 2020 Reimagined, held August 11–14, was much like a face-to-face event. There were engaging keynote speakers, lively worship sessions, home groups, a service project, as well as workshops and spiritual practice sessions too numerous to list. Each morning started with Teachings by Elders, and each evening ended with a fun social time. Photos were shared, chats occurred, and exhibits viewed. Some people participated from home, others took part while camping, and some joined in from their church parking lots.

More than 480 young people attended the various activities over the course of the event. There were participants from every province in Canada as well as denominations, including Anglican, Lutheran, and United Church of Christ. The virtual nature of the event drew the circle wider than ever: Global partners from around the world, including the Philippines, Palestine, France, and Kenya joined in.

Together, the participants shared bold faith, created brave space, and offered one another brazen grace—all from a safe distance. Several young people thanked the church for finding a creative way to host Rendez-vous. "Thank you so much for continuing with Rendez-vous," one participant wrote, "I find it difficult to be in social settings at the best of times so this was wonderful for me. I did miss creating those physical connections but I am glad we were still able to gather, from a safe distance." Following a moving keynote speech by Dr. James Makokis, a leader and well-known expert within the Indigenous, LGBTQ2 and medical community, one young person wrote, "Being a young person going through college, it makes me feel so much better when I hear someone who has failed but was able to get back on their feet. It's so inspiring."

Your gifts through Mission & Service are hard at work in these challenging times supporting youth and young adults. Thank you! Your gifts help transform and save lives, inspire meaning and purpose, and build a better world.

Prayers for this day

O God of our lives, God of love, we come to you with humble hearts. At times, we find ourselves asking "Who am I, to go...?" May we have the courage to let go of our own self-doubt, and be people of vision and hope.

We give thanks for the changing season, for the cooler evenings, and relief from the heat. We know that around us harvest is underway, or soon to be, and we

give thanks for farm families and the labour they do. We pray for safety in their toils.

We give thanks for all those starting the school year - teachers and school staff, parents and students, bus drivers, and caretakers – whether they will be working online, in-person, in clusters. This will be a challenging time, as routines are new no matter where they find themselves. We pray for patience, for safety, for all.

As we begin steps to re-start at church, we pray for those that do not feel ready, we pray for those who will step up and take on new responsibilities, we pray for our own patience, as like school, things at church will be new and different.

For those in our circles living with loss, with loneliness, with transition of any kind, O God, we pray.

In the wider world, we pray for all places in our world where greed and want have replaced equity and justice.

For the wider United Church– we give thanks for Rev. Michael Blair, who will begin duties later in the fall as the new General Secretary of the United Church of Canada, and pray for courage, strength and wisdom as he takes on this leadership role.

Gracious and loving God, we trust that you hold all of our prayers – these written here, and those we hold in our hearts, close to your heart. Wrap us in love as we share the words of Jesus.



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.

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 worship and reflective posts on our Facebook Group – Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge. Feel free to invite others to join that group.

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 so, call the church office for assistance with that.

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

*And the good news...Olds and Sundre United Churches will resume worship on
September 13th, 2020*

A letter will be sent out explaining all precautions and COVID safety protocol, this coming week. It is our hope that you will discern your own personal risk level, and decide if you will join us. We will also be posting worship to our website, and hope to continue recording worship and posting it to our Facebook Group.

**Please note that effective September 13 – Olds will worship at 9:30, to
accommodate Redemption Church's worship at 11:00
Sundre will worship at the usual time of 1:30.**

Praise be!

