



**Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge of the United Church At
Home Worship
Sunday July 5, 2020**



Minister: Rev. Tammy Allan

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 the land and the people, as those who came before us did.

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.

As you worship, try to create a space for that. 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.

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 Sabbath promise, you created not only work but the blessing of rest. In those times when we feel exhausted, overstressed, or overwhelmed, when we are in need of renewal and refreshment, re-create us, we pray.
Help us to take up your invitation of respite for our souls and spirits, comfort for our minds and bodies, and pause for quiet, for rest, for Sabbath. Open us to receive the gentleness of your Spirit, throughout life's journey. Amen.

Musical selection MV Behold, Behold (sung twice)

Reading for today

Matthew 11:16-19 and 25-30

¹⁶“But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, ¹⁷‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’ ¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; ¹⁹the 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.”

²⁵At 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; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷All 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.



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

A Message for Today

Today’s gospel reading begins with Jesus’ commentary on his generation not listening to either John or Jesus – and stating that he – Jesus – is the embodiment of the wisdom of God.

Then we skip over a few verses – ones that some would argue don’t really fit with the rest of this passage. What is skipped in verses 20 to 24 is Jesus’ condemnation of communities that do not seek repentance, that do not heed Jesus’ call to transform their old ways of being into ways of right relationship with one another and with God.

The reading picks up again with Jesus’ prayer thanking God because he has “hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and revealed them to infants.” The “wise and intelligent” likely refers to those who reject Jesus and his message, - religious leaders, whom Jesus often challenges for their abuses of power, for their failure to live according to God’s way of justice and righteousness. Sarcasm – even in biblical wisdom.

The reference to "infants," in the passage, on the other hand, speaks of more than just the very young. That reference encompasses all who are not regarded as wise or important in that time. They are those on the margins – the poor, the sick, the tax collectors – all those who the religious authorities would deem as sinners, or people of little value in society. Note that the list encompasses all who came to Jesus for healing - physical or spiritual healing, body or soul.

As I reflect on that word "infants" and those it refers to in this passage, I can't help but think of some of the events of the past weeks, and the renewed call across the world to address issues of racism and discrimination. We live in a world, still, where people are "othered" because of the colour of their skin, because of the customs they practice, because of the language they speak, because of how they dress. We live in a world where some people are valued according to different sets of rules than others. It is as unjust now as it was in Jesus' time.

The passage moves from this piece into a one that many of us are familiar with – words that are often read at the bedside of the ill or the dying; and more often still are shared with the gathered community as they celebrate the life of a loved one, at memorial services and funerals. This is that piece about the yoke of Christ.

Remember that a yoke is an implement that holds two animals together, so that their work load, their burden, is shared. The message is that Jesus – out of love for all people – offers to share the work, the burdens of life, that Jesus walks along with us in solidarity – that our challenges and burdens are made lighter when we are in relationship with him.

We, in turn, are called by the Spirit to follow in the way. As followers, we are called to live as Jesus did, so to be people who offer to help others by sharing their burdens, by lighting the load anyone is bearing alone. In many ways, that is a defining principle of our churches ministries of pastoral care. I do some of that ministry myself, however it is one of the great gifts of our pastoral charge, that we have many people who care, who reach out and offer love and compassion to neighbours. Even, and especially in this time when we cannot gather yet in person at church, I know that many are appreciating the many ways people are caring for one another in community.

We've seen that kind of love and compassion lived out on a wider scale too – just a couple of weeks ago – over 500 people gathered to support the Black Lives Matter initiative in Innisfail. 500 people, who stood for racial justice in our region. As I write this, I know there will be a similar event held here in Olds, this week. I extend my prayers for that gathering, and in another time, I would have stood alongside those who attend. The realities of COVID, and having close family members who are seriously immune-compromised means I stand with them in prayer, but not in person.

No doubt that each and everyone of us in this room has a story of times and places where we have experienced someone sharing the yoke of life's burdens and challenges with us, helping us to walk an easier road. And no doubt the call of discipleship means that each of us has, in some way, walked alongside another who has been in need of that kind of solidarity too.

An image I came across in my reading this week stands out for me. It is from "The Message" – Eugene Peterson's translation of the biblical texts. He writes of the sharing the yoke with Jesus, and in his translation, Jesus says: "Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace."

If only more of the world's people could see the idea of sharing the life's burdens as an act of embodiment of the "unforced rhythms of grace." What peace, what hope, we would have.

For us today...as followers of the way of Jesus...how are we called to live? As we go into the weeks and days ahead, may we indeed be the kind of people who respond to that call to seek those places where we can be bearers of love and compassion, where we can be agents of grace in a world that so needs our love. Amen.

Hymn VU I Heard the Voice of Jesus

This Week's Minute for Mission

Awesome and Awe-Filled: Camp Bimini

Camp Bimini creates camping memories.



Put friends first to make friends last—
On this you can depend.

Through thin or thick, you'll be my pick—
You'll always be my friend.
Bimini friends are always friends,
Who always will be near.
Through Jesus Christ we're a family
To last all through the years.

Since 1947, Camp Bimini has been offering memorable camping experiences for all ages. Adventures in nature, sports, crafts, music, swimming, campfires and more encourage staff, campers, and volunteers to play, laugh, learn, love, sing, grow, teach, create, and simply be.

The well-being of children and adults is linked to the amount of time spent in nature: The more time spent outdoors, the better off people are. At Bimini, God's creation is vibrant and dynamic, an awesome and awe-filled place and space. The camp is energized for the upcoming season and all that it will be offering. They are energized, too, for what our campers, staff, and volunteers will be sharing with one another. Friends are always nearby, and times of discovery and opportunities to do both familiar and new things are always there. Everyone looks forward to all the adventure, discovery, fun, and friendship. When you are at Bimini, you are repeatedly reminded that you are indeed a precious child of God. The camp hopes everyone experiences that "Bimini friends are always friends."

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.

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Tammy's Note: This above piece doesn't include the reality that our church camps, because of CIVID restrictions can not operate this year. Those that have the resources to do so are doing some online programming, however this will be a very different camping season, for Camp Bimini, and our own Kasota East Camp. This image below is from KEC's Facebook page.



Prayers for this day

Loving and compassionate God, we come to you with open hearts. We pray that we may be shaped by your vision for the world, for all of creation. Help us as we are shaped, to encourage and lead others in the ways of justice and peace.

Give us the courage to take risks, to be adventurous. Give us faith to know that you are present with us always. As we journey through these days of pandemic, help us remember that we are still the church, still called to serve, to love, to follow in the way of Jesus.

Awaken us to creative possibilities – enable us and empower us to transform our lives, and the life of the world. Help us to build relationships with one another based on mutual respect and compassion.

As we enjoy sunshine and warm weather, we think of those for whom isolation has become a source of anxiety and suffering. We pray for those whose lives have been directly affected by CORONA virus – those who are ill, those whose vocation is in health care and front line services.

Within our own communities, we know of people living with loss; people living with illnesses other than COVID, people awaiting or experiencing treatments for illness; people living with major life transitions. We hold them in prayer.

God of hope and healing, we offer all these prayers to you, and the prayers of our hearts, knowing that each of our prayers are enfolded in your grace.

For this we give you thanks and praise, and we continue our prayer using Jesus' words:



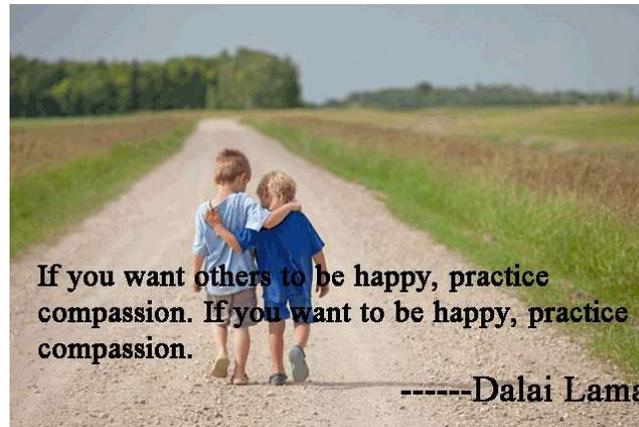
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom,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

Hymn MV 89 Love is the Touch

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! 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 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 supporting 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. Amounts over \$20.00 will be tax receiptable, at the end of the year. Our church mailing addresses are:

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

And

Sundre United Church PO Box 614

118 Centre Street North Sundre AB. T0M 1X0