



**Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge of the United Church
At Home Worship
May 10, 2020 Fifth Sunday of the Easter Season
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 you worship at home, 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. 😊

Opening Call / Prayer

Jesus said, I go and prepare a place for you, and I will come again.

And so we gather in this place to know your presence and your love, now and always, O God.

Jesus said, I am the way, and the truth, and the life. If you know me, you know God.

We pray to know you more deeply, that we may know God more intimately, now and always.

Jesus said, Ask me for anything, and I will do it.

Help us to ask for the right things, Jesus, that we may fulfill your will, now and always.

Jesus said, Believe in me, and Follow me.

Help us to worship you fully believing and following – now and always!

Source: https://www.ucc.org/easter_5_may_10

Hymn Let Us Build a House <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKJgcv8SdnQ>

Reading for today

John 14: 1-14

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.” ⁵Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” ⁸Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.”

⁹Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

¹²Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.



A Message for Today

In the United Church of Canada, Mother’s Day is designated as Christian Family Sunday. It is a day that we acknowledge the value of family, and of the gifts that are found in family. We also, our course, honour the gifts of those who mother, who nurture, who care for others.

Family may not be related by birth people, and “Mother’s Day” isn’t just for people who have given birth to children. Many people have “chosen” family members, people that for them, along the journey of life, have become significant members of their circle. Many have “chosen” mother figures...and they are not necessarily even women.

And, lots of us have loving relationships with the person that gave birth to us, or the person or persons who were our primary care givers as we grew into who we are today. Why do we celebrate Christian Family Sunday on Mother’s Day and not Father’s Day? Who knows. Perhaps it’s simply because in our denomination, by the time Father’s Day rolls around, we’re in what many of us call the “low season” in our church life. Many are out enjoying nature and warmer weather on Sundays, and church attendance has dropped for the summer. So better to have a special day earlier in the year.

Regardless of why today is the day...I wish blessing upon all who share their gifts of “mothering” with those around them. For some of us, this is a day to remember our mothers, who are no longer with us; for some, it’s a day for long distant phone calls, for some, it’s a day for in person

visiting with family. Even COVID 19 restrictions have lifted enough to let people who have beloved family members living in seniors residences have a visit – albeit brief and outside.

And with that, let us turn to the scripture for today. The imagery of home in this passage is strong in those first few verses, as we hear that Jesus goes to prepare a place for each of us. We are given this assurance that all will be well. These are words of great comfort, to so many. They are words that I have shared at bedside with people facing end of life. They are words that were shared at my mom's celebration of life, and I have shared them at services of celebration for many.

Those words fit for people like my own mom - people who have that spiritual gift of hospitality, that gift of making sure there is a place of comfort, a shelter for any who need it. That gift of hospitality is one of the legacies my mom left for us – as she instilled in her descendants that gift of compassionate welcome and care.

For me this passage is also a strong reminder of my paternal grandmother. We called her Gram. Her most common saying: "We can always put another bean in the pot." This from a woman who had 8 children, when times were tough – 7 of them boys. 7 of her 8 children lived to adulthood, one son taken by disease at a very early age. One more bean, even when there was barely enough to go around for all those kids and my papa there was always room for a visitor. And as years passed, and life got better, her generosity and welcome of visitors just increased. Gram loved to have visitors, loved to tell stories, and best of all, loved it when her house was full of her kids and grandkids. Sunday afternoons at Gram's were the best! We always felt welcomed, at home, loved when we were at Gram's.

On this Christian Family Sunday, I invite you to take some time and reflect on your own stories – whether those stories are from your birth family or your chosen family. Where are the places you felt welcomed and loved? Where are the places that you knew the presence of God? How does this passage of scripture touch you?

Maybe there isn't a specific place, maybe it's not a house, that you envision when you recall your own stories. I know that for some, that place of welcome is found in a church setting, and I have, throughout my ministry, endeavoured to work with every congregation I have served to create spaces of welcome and hospitality for all who enter. That is key to the health and well-being of congregations.

For some, that welcome place is with a particular friend or family member, in the great outdoors. I have a dear friend for whom that place is a favourite campground that her whole family – both

by birth and by choice - gather every summer. Now, this year, how that gathering happens may change, because of COVID 19 – however I know my friend, she will find a way!

For some, the place of welcome and hospitality is a homeless shelter, or a safe haven for people who are victims of domestic violence, or a detox or rehabilitation centre. For some, it is a long term care centre, or seniors' residence. In these days, I am so incredibly grateful for the welcome and care all those who staff those kinds of facilities offer, and for the many ways they prepare a place for those who truly need it. They may not name it as such, however for me, the hands and feet of Christ are at work in all of those places.

This week, as well, I am especially grateful for the pastoral gifts of two colleagues and their church community – and particularly saddened for them. This week, those colleagues were able to share the story of their faith community, with CTV News in Calgary. You may have heard the report, which did not name the church. It was Living Spirit United Church, in Calgary, and the story of how it has been directly affected by COVID 19. They held their last worship the same day we did, March 15. Following worship they had a birthday celebration for a member who was having a significant birthday that day. 41 people attended worship. The virus, unfortunately, was in the building, as one of my colleagues said this week. 24 people tested positive for COVID 19, 4 of those were hospitalized, and sadly, two congregants died. As we celebrate this day, may we lift up in prayer this faith family, in their time of grief and loss.

We are in strange new times, and I know that many are wondering, hoping that we can gather to worship with our church families again. Who knew on March 15th that we'd not yet be able to worship together 2 months later. The clear message from my colleagues who have experienced such grief is caution, caution, caution.

Hence, I feel like the mother hen who wants to enfold her chicks in her wings, and hold them safe. I want to trust that we will be together in due time, carefully, and cautiously. And I know that time will likely not be until the fall.

Know that until that time comes, I hold you all in prayer, particularly those among us who are feeling the isolation the most. I think of those who have had recent losses of loved ones, those who are having health challenges, or relationship challenges, and those who are experiencing economic challenges in these times.

May God help us believe and live into that first line of today's scripture – "Don't let your hearts be troubled." Let us trust that God is with us as we journey together – safely socially distant – yet together. May we trust that God's compassion is being lived out amongst us, in care-givers

and nurses, doctors, sales clerks, cleaners, mothers and mothering people. And may this Mother's Day, this Christian Family Sunday, bring you moments of joy and peace. Amen.



Hymn Will You Come and Follow Me <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zK6IUaIJ3sk>

This Week's Minute for Mission video

This video celebrates church camps...a few weeks ago we shared the Kasota East Camp video, this one is called "Loved by Generations: Sherbrooke Lake Camp

Sherbrooke Lake Camp in New Ross, Nova Scotia, began in 1964. The children and youth who attended then are now the parents and grandparents of today's campers. The camp also offers a two-night Family Camp. By gathering people to have fun and give thanks for creation and community, camps like this one can transform people for the better! Our gifts for Mission & Service make United Church camps possible.

Download the video here: <http://bit.ly/35mKiWp>

Prayers for this day

O God, we come before you in a spirit of prayer, knowing that our world is hurting.

We know that in your name, people of compassion have created places of safety and refuge.

May those in need to be guided to those places.

There are places for those who mourn, for those who are hurting; places of comfort and healing. We pray for those who seek that this day.

There are places for those who hunger and thirst... places of banquets and grace: and we give thanks for those whose hospitality and compassion creates welcome and a sense of being 'home'.

We pray for those in our own circles in need of healing, of hope, of strength to face the challenges of life.

On this day of celebration of the gifts of mothering, of care, of compassion, of nurture and love, we give thanks for those who share those gifts with us, and for the love of family, by birth or by choice.

O God, help us to be builders of the values we associate with that word family: trust, acceptance, unconditional love.

We pause for a moment of silent reflection, as we lift to you the prayers of our hearts...
God of grace and love, may we feel the presence of our friends and neighbours in faith as we pray the words Jesus taught his disciples to pray.



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

Let us go into the week ahead with joy on our hearts certain that God's love is with us, and will never leave us. Thanks be to God! 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.

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Here is a link to some on-line worship opportunities in the Chinook Winds Region. It is an interesting experience to sit in a comfy chair at home and worship. Enjoy.

<https://chinookwindsregion.ca/2020/03/16/online-worship-opportunities/>