

Drawn In: Living Out the Creative Life with God

HOVER - June 13, 2021

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

Good morning friends and welcome to the worship of God with McClure United Church. Also.. Happy Pride to you!!! Most of you will know that June is not only Indigenous History Month but also Pride Month. Today is Pride Sunday in Saskatoon as our Pride celebrations are underway. Saskatoon Pride has organized some very fun events throughout the week including the Virtual Pride Parade next Saturday at 1pm. You can find all of the pride information on the Saskatoon Pride website and the link to the parade was sent out in today's email.

To honour Pride as well as our commitment to be public, intentional and explicit in our welcoming of folks within the 2SLGBT+ community, our Affirming Committee will be sharing various Prideful posts on our Facebook page throughout the week. If you are looking for a full pride worship service, you might consider tuning into the worship at St. Martin's United Church... there service is recorded and can be viewed on their website anytime. Or you might want to consider joining the Multi-Spiritual Pride Celebration on Thursday at 6pm. We have shared the link for this in the email as well.

In other news... we will be drawing our Zoom coffeetime to a close for the summer but, do not despair... we are going to give in person coffeetime a go beginning Friday, July 2nd at 10am in the church parking lot. I really hope to see you there. We will continue to mask up and keep a distance of course. I know many of you have already received your second vaccination... but many have not and we continue to want to keep everyone safe. So bring a lawn chair and a cup of your favourite beverage... and join us.

We had our first Wednesday discussion gathering this week on the worship theme and I am so grateful to those who showed up... I know Zoom isn't ideal but gosh its still nice to get together with others and chat. It was a great discussion and I look forward to more this Wednesday at 6:30pm. Feel free to join as you are able... attendance at all 6 gatherings is not necessary.

I think that's all I have for announcements but please be sure to check your email or our website for more information... its always possible that I'm forgetting something.

Let's now prepare for worship.

OPENING

(music begins)

Sung:

In the world of the driven
Let us be drawn in
Let your love be a given
Let us be drawn in
To imagine, to dream, to create, to redeem
For the sake of the livin'
Let us be drawn in

(music continues)

Hovering is the creative posture of taking a moment to see the “big picture.” In a world of quick fixes and instant gratification, we sometimes forget to consider what it is we really need to focus on. Giving ourselves space and time to think, to ruminate, to consider what is necessary, feels like a luxury but in fact creativity experts and Jesus point to the importance of taking reflective time. If you didn't feel that you had to do or fix *EVERYTHING*, what *ONE* thing would you work on at this point in your life? What is it that you are drawn to?

Sung:

In the world of the driven
Let us be drawn in
Let your love be a given
Let us be drawn in
To imagine, to dream, to create, to redeem
For the sake of the livin'
Let us be drawn in

Let us pray:

Hovering God,
you are as close as the air we walk through and breathe.
Open us to stop and feel your presence this day
so that we might learn what *you* would have us do in the midst of so *much* to do.

Draw us into your quiet patience.

Give us the courage to wait.

Amen.

OPENING SONG: Lift Up Your Hearts – Rick Burton and Joy McFarlane-Burton

SCRIPTURE

Luke 4:1-13

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.’ Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, “One does not live by bread alone.”’ Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, ‘To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.’ Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, “Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”’ Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,” and “On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.”’ Jesus answered him, ‘It is said, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’ When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.”

REFLECTION

A human soul that is focused on God’s dream works like a converging lens... a piece of glass that has been created in such a way that its focal point is beyond itself.

in a converging lens, all of the light rays bend... they come together... to a specific focal point...

And this creates a much sharper image than if the light was diffused everywhere.

This converging lens is a great metaphor for what we might say is the “calling” of the human soul.

By calling I mean... a strong urge.. or pull... toward a particular way of life.. like a career or vocation... a volunteer opportunity. Parenting is a calling for some. It could also be a pull towards living out a certain set of ethics or values... like environmentalist, for example.. are living out their calling to protect the earth.

The opposite of a converging lens is a diverging lens. (show image)

A diverging lens causes light rays from a specific focal point to be spread out in many different directions. This lens.. could also be a metaphor for a human soul.

When you feel like you are spread too thin, it's not necessarily because you have no energy, but because your energies are diffused. They're going off in a hundred different directions and there really isn't a focal point.

God has a dream for how we can... and should.. live out our faith. As folks who have a desire to live within God's dream, we need to be more like the converging lens, our energies focused beyond ourselves. Discovering God's dream takes time and a certain amount of intentionality... and this is why we need to hover.

In the realm of spiritual discernment, hovering is called "soul searching." It is the practice of looking within yourself to find whatever energies, desires, and passions you have that may be aligned with your Calling and orienting them in this direction—clearing whatever blockages there might be... adjusting focus.

Hovering is what Jesus did for forty days in the wilderness before preaching the sermon in Nazareth that you heard about last week. That sermon represents Jesus' own calling... the piece of God's dream that he was called to live out: "to bring good news to the poor ... proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

We "overhear" Jesus' internal hovering when we hear the story of his temptations by the devil. In Hebrew, the devil is called the satan, which means Adversary or Accuser. In the wilderness, the Adversary tried to throw off Jesus' focus by shifting it in a direction away from his calling. Now this wouldn't have been an easy task for the Adversary of Jesus. The Adversary couldn't just pull out any old temptation. The temptation would have to tempt Jesus with good... not evil – and not just any good but the wrong good.

That'll make sense in a minute.. I hope.

For Jesus to be tempted, the Adversary would have to take one of Jesus' great loves, something Jesus had already experienced as good and right, and get him to elevate that love in the wrong way... for the wrong purpose. In other words, the Adversary wasn't trying to create overt evil, more of a misdirected focus, sending all of Jesus' energy to the wrong place.

The Adversary pulled out three of Jesus' great loves—feeding the hungry, working for justice, and gathering a community of committed disciples. None of these loves are evil, and Jesus had lived them throughout his ministry. The Adversary simply tried to tempt Jesus... to focus all of his energy toward one of them – to use for his own benefit.. his own power.... which, of course, would take him away from his true calling

“Turn stones into bread, Jesus! You know you want to feed the world.”

“I’ll give you all the kingdoms of the world! You know you long for God to be the world’s true leader.”

“Show the world evidence that you are the Messiah! You know you want the world to hear your voice and follow God.”

While all of these temptations were part of Jesus’ sense of call, none of them represented his whole call. His great love for feeding the hungry, working for justice, and gathering a community of disciples were meant to serve a much higher purpose... sharing in God’s dream for the world.

Discerning all of this, I’m sure, didn’t come easily for Jesus. Like the rest of us, he had to “hover”... he had to discern... reflect.. listen... and decide. He had to know and commit to his calling... bringing it into a single point of focus.

I feel incredibly grateful to have found my own point of focus. Now let me just say clearly... I know my focus – I have a clear understanding of my calling – but I am also easily susceptible to distraction... to doubt... to temptation.

But my calling is clear and I always find my way back to it.

You might think my calling is to ministry in the church.

That’s certainly the primary way I live my calling... but my actual calling is to do whatever I can to help people to hear and really know that all of us are loved by a power so much greater than ourselves... a Creator who sees us fully as we are and loves us completely. My life work is to claim this for myself as truth and to journey with others who are struggling to understand the same. And the second part of my calling is a response to the love that I have received... by sharing it with others.

This calling I believe began at a very very early age... I was the child who always brought home stray animals... I was the child who tried to be friends with the new kids at school. I was very sensitive... and cried easily when I knew some living being was suffering.

Unfortunately some things happened when I was a kid that kind of got in the way of the path I was on and I got lost for a few years. But when I found my way back to myself.. I found God there... waiting

I hovered for awhile... reconnecting with myself and with God.... And I surrounded myself with a group of friends who helped me to see myself as imperfectly perfect and completely worthy of love.

My calling ever since has been to share that message with others. I’ve chosen to do it through paid accountable ministry in the United Church but I know many others who have shared similar messages of love and compassion in a whole variety of ways... in the weeks to come you will hear from some of these

people – last week you heard from Joyce about her love of music... and you'll be hearing from an accountant, an engineer, a parent, a figure skater... all of whom will share about their own call.

Every call requires some hovering. And often the hovering is a process... it takes time. Few people in this world have a “road to Damascus” experience... a powerful zap or flash of light... or some other dramatic experience that comes with the sudden sure knowledge of what their path should be. Rather, the hovering process involves a conscious listening to your own life, which will reveal to you what calling is.

The writer and poet Frederick Buechner says that “the place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”

What is your deep gladness?

What do you do that makes you feel most alive, most yourself?

It might be making music... or baking a pie.

Maybe you just love helping someone find their way with technology...

or maybe you feel most alive standing in front of a classroom.

It may be several things, which is a blessing.

Discerning among them is where Buechner’s second component comes in:

Where does your gladness intersect with the world’s hunger?

Where are your gifts most needed?

Attending to the world’s hunger doesn’t mean you have to abandon your own joy or become a people-pleaser.

It just means that you actively look for ways to make a difference using those gifts that bring you joy.

Hovering is a process of discovery... of discerning – figuring things out.

Sometimes is a trial and error kind of deal. You may think you’re called to one area, for example, only to realize later that you were motivated more by prestige or pleasing your parents than you were by paying attention to your own gladness and the world’s hunger. Or maybe be your gladness has shifted and you just need to hover again...

So try to just trust in the process. Look through the lens... find your convergence point, then hover over all your life loves... focus... adjust... focus again... hover until you discover your part in fulfilling God’s dream.

(interview with Natasha)

PASTORAL PRAYERS/LORD’S PRAYER

God, we know you are the Source of Life and we are in awe at the wonder of your creation. The diversity of plants and bugs and sea creatures reveal a

world that seems too vast to comprehend. We recognize you in stardust and pollen, in mountain granite and salty seas, in the synapses of the human brain and the migrating patterns of the birds. That you have granted us sufficient knowledge to explore the outer regions of space and the molecular structure of our own hearts is a gift beyond measure. We marvel that you are in all, that you are in us, that you are the source of all that is.

Today we thank you for the magnificent diversity of the human community. For black hair and blond hair, for auburn hair and no hair at all; for loud voices and soft voices; for bodies with muscles and bodies with resilience, we thank you. We are grateful for the opportunity to discover you through love – love of our children; of our parents; of our friends, of our lovers and even of strangers. We are blessed by our differences which inspire us and cause us to appreciate the breadth of human experience - art and mathematics; sport and opera; ideas and feelings; alone time and time in community. We thank you *Source of All That Is* that you have made us different and in doing so have created a rainbow of people, experiences and opportunities.

Today we pray for those who have felt undervalued because of their difference. We remember generations of people who have been excluded or persecuted because of who they have loved or how they experience their sexual identity. Remind us of the blessings of diversity and turn your world from exclusion to acceptance. Today we also pray for those who have been oppressed or exploited because of the colour of their skin and whose hearts ache in the face of prejudice. Remind us that Your Spirit beats in every human heart.

Especially today we pray ...

- For those who still feel the need to hide their true selves for fear of reprisal. Strengthen our commitment to **affirm** the worth and dignity of all people and especially those who turn to McClure for community
- For those who are still marginalized because of race or culture. Strengthen our efforts to welcome the stranger and enliven within us a commitment to stand in solidarity with our Indigenous relatives
- For those who have felt invisible in the face of the Covid pandemic – elders who have been isolated and cut off from community; service workers who have felt taken for granted; the grieving who have had to bear their pain alone – we pray your love on them all today.

You are the Life Force that calls us forward into your dream... a new world that is safer, more equitable and contains justice for all. Enliven our spirits to walk toward this vision, we pray. Amen

MUSIC: She Flies On – Caroline May

BLESSING

I invite you now to consider one thing you might do this week that will make your heart sing and your creativity soar.

May you see the unfolding of each day,
as an opportunity to be a Co-Creator with God.

As a Jesus-Follower, may you feel his company leading you
toward creating more kindness, justice and mercy.

May you know the nudge of the Creative Spirit within,
“making belief” in all you are and do.

SUNG BLESSING: Sent Out in Jesus’ Name – Elin Sletmoen