

McClure United Church
Sacred Earth, Sacred Work
October 17, 2021

Welcome and Announcements

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Welcome to worship with McClure United Church. As was described in the introduction we are a faith community that does its best to be a church of welcome and of service to others.

I'm glad you have chosen to worship with us today.

I'm not sure how you are choosing to be with us today - if you are joining via live stream, so we can watch together at 10am on Sunday mornings welcome – it is rather nice to know we are worshipping together at the same time – please feel free to say good morning to other worshipers by using the chat box. If you are worshipping outside the designated live stream time. It is good to have you along.

Thanksgiving weekend I hosted the Baptism of a lovely little fellow, Smith Andrews. Several folks from McClure church were in attendance which was wonderful and I thank them for helping support the Andrew's family. The recording of his baptism is attached to this worship.

[Next Sunday](#), October 24th along with our regular worship service, we will be celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism for two baby cousins at 11am. Laura will be at the church with those two families along with a small number of folks representing our congregation and the service will be livestreamed to our YouTube channel as well. The link to that celebration will be shared in [next Sunday's](#) email and you can also find it on our Facebook page and YouTube channel. We hope you will join us.

This is our last worship in the series Sacred Earth, Sacred Work - I hope you have found this worship theme interesting and a spirit filled experience. I don't think there is a time of year that we are more aware of the beauty and wonder of creation and our connection to it - than the fall. As always Laura and I welcome your comments, ideas and encouragement.

Our announcements are written up for you in the email sent to you with the worship link and I encourage you to have a close read of those. You can also read about what is going on by visiting the Church's website and checking the church's Facebook page.

Just a couple of reminders:

I started a Devotions and Discussion group designed for folks to gather via zoom to hear scripture and to chat and pray together and we only had a couple of folks participate so we are going to stop meeting for now and perhaps start up again early in the new year.

The National church Wednesday at 1pm bible study is on going so too is the Email Book group.

Last Tuesday we began our 40 Days of Engagement on Racism series. This is a program of The United Church and is open to everyone interested in deepening their commitment to anti-racism. Each day from October 12 until November 26, excluding weekends, you will receive a new reflection on anti-racism as well as activities suitable for adults and children that can be done alone, as a family or in a group. There are also some online sessions for those interested. The link to sign up was sent to you in the weekly email. And then every Sunday from 1-2pm we will gather online with some folks from St. Martin' United Church to chat about what we've been reflecting on that week.

We are sneaking up on the pie fundraiser. We are having another pie sale on Thursday, October 28th. We are in need of two groups of people to help out with this... first, we need the bakers...and eaters... to donate pies, please contact Ebba Eggleston and her # is in the email. Then, we need eaters... that's you! If you would like to order a pie, please contact Marlene Kells and her # is also in the email. All orders must be placed by October 24th that is next Sunday and picked up on the 28th between 4-6:30pm. All funds raised will go to the general operations of the church.

This week our Senior and Junior youth are connecting. The Senior **Youth group** will meet Sunday morning at 11am with Laura and the **Junior Youth** - grades 6-8 will meet at 11am Sunday with Mark Anderson.

Women's and Men's Saturday Morning 8am gatherings the Men's gathering is Saturday October 23 and the women's gathering is coming up November 6 via zoom. Send me an email if you would like to get the link information or call the office.

And our **McClure United Church 55th Anniversary** is coming up October 31 - so I would like to encourage individuals and families to record a Happy Anniversary greeting and send it in to the church. We will put the greetings together and share them as part of the celebration.

And Laura and I are cooking up a 'trick or treat' event for kids on October 31 so stay tuned for details.

Laura is now going to help us centre our hearts as we worship.

Intro to Theme

The theme for this... the last Sunday in our Season of Creation Series called "Sacred Earth, Sacred Work",... is healing relationships.

We live in sacred relationship with every other living thing. Our food, our health, our homes, our vocations are all part of an interconnected community. Creation hangs in the balance when we forget this connection. We acknowledge that our species and the entire earth community depends upon the healing of harm already done, moving toward sustainability for the future, and harmony that offers live-giving coexistence for all.

Can we embrace our responsibility to care? Now is the time, if we want a future. I invite you to consider this now as I light the Christ candle... a reminder that the light and love of Christ guides on our spiritual journey.

Candle Lighting

Music: "Come All You People"

Opening Prayer

Connecting God, You who has woven us together with all of creation, open our eyes to see that we cannot survive in isolation so that we might be motivated to turn toward the other in whatever way we are able, and work for the wholeness of all life. We praise you as the healer of all hurt, the repairer of all brokenness. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Hymn: "For the Fruit of All Creation"

Scripture Reading: Matthew 10:13-16

¹³ People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you,

whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”
¹⁶ And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Sermon

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you O God, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

During these colourful, weather changing, harvest busy days we have been invited by the earth itself to pay attention and to care. Over the past six weeks Laura and I have done our best to explore the theme of Sacred Earth, Sacred Work so that we might all be reminded of our Christian calling and our sacred relationship with the earth and the all of earth creatures.

I have been remembering the first time I became aware of this web of holy interconnection with the earth and each other. I was in my twenties and on internship in Grenada. Grenada is a small island, 134 square miles or 347 square kilometers at the bottom of the Caribbean island cluster. It is nick named the “spice island” as it produces many different spices for export – in particular one quarter of the world’s nutmeg. If you had a pumpkin pie this past Thanksgiving weekend you probably tasted some Grenadian spice. I was in Grenada because the United Church of Canada had partners there. The United Church was in a partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Grenada – the Presbyterian Church had asked the United Church to send them an ordained minister to serve with them and so for several years an ordained UC minister did spend time with them. When he retired they were able to hire a minister from Ghana and they enjoyed his ministry for many years. In the spirit of true partnership, the UC church asked the Presbyterian church if they would help train one of its students – that is where I came in. I learned a great deal in those four months in Grenada.

I remember one particular afternoon. I was taken to visit several groups who were receiving United Church of Canada Mission and Service money. So

you know the little box you check on your pledge card that says Mission and Service – I got to be where that money was making a difference and see those funds at work. Amazing.

My first stop was at a woman's co op, there I met an incredibly resilient group of women who were working to create small businesses that would provide further income for their families. I was very warmly welcomed and was thanked over and over again for the gift of money that the United Church of Canada had sent. The women told me that the United Church money was so special because it came with no strings attached. The United Church had given them the money needed to build a small community centre. The women told me they desperately needed the building to house the dentist and doctor when they came to town. They needed the building so the women could gather for classes, and they needed a place for meetings and for projects like jewelry making. The United Church was the only group that would give them the money for a building; all other funders wanted the money used for what they thought the women needed. The United Church was the only funder that trusted them and listened to what they needed. Our money was very well used.

After the Women's co- op I was taken to a village farming initiative. Here United Church funds were being used to purchase goats. As the goats made baby goats more families were able to start their own little herds. Sharing the goats made for a healthy goat herd with lots of spin off industries for local families. Again our money was being very well used to care for small farms and their families.

On my way home to St. George's we drove through combination fields of nutmeg and banana trees. I learned that the banana plants help keep the soil from eroding and therefore helps the nutmeg trees which have very shallow root systems. What was unusual was that all the banana tree fruit had big plastic, dry

cleaning type bags hanging from them. I was told that if the farmers want to sell their bananas internationally to Europe or to the United States they need to make sure the bananas don't have any spots on them. Buyers in those countries don't like their bananas to have spots and when it rains the bananas get water spots. So the farmers buy the bags from the shipping company - who sets the price for the bags and they must also purchase fertilizer from the shipping company who again sets the price of fertilizer. Basically the farmers are in an impossible situation and completely at the mercy of the shipping company – there is no other market for the bananas - so because I don't like bananas with water marks farmers are forced to use environmentally disastrous plastics and artificial fertilizers that mess with the soil. I had no idea what kind of impact my North American choices was having on people half a world away.

We know we are in big time globe trouble. We know because scientists have told us so. Their words have been amplified by artists and activists and truth tellers. Greta Thunberg has been a prophet to our world in this regard. We know we can no longer ignore our impact on the climate, food production and the wellbeing of others.

The problems are so large and I admit I am tempted to throw up my hands and give in to the powers that be. But then I remember those women in Grenada who just needed to be “heard” and “trusted” in order for them to make a difference in the lives of their families. I think about those farmers who were sharing goats and creating new opportunities for themselves and their neighbours. I think about those banana farmers waiting for me to be okay with bananas that have water spots. When I think about them I am inspired. What kept them moving forward against such huge obstacles?

Why did the women of the coop want the dentist and the doctor to come – so their kids would be healthy. Why did they meet and work together, because they wanted a better life for their children.

Why did the farmers share the goats because the income from the goats would be enough to buy uniforms so their children could go to school.

Why did the banana farmers keep trying to get a fair price for their bananas because they had little mouths to feed and medicine to buy.

These amazing and resilient people wanted a good life for themselves but mostly they wanted a good life for their children. Not an extravagant life but a life with enough, enough food, good healthcare and the opportunity for them to go to school.

Here is where I see the thread of our connection once again. We love our children too. We want them to have a good life, to have the food they need and healthcare and strong educations. We want them to live full lives on a planet that is alive.

Our scripture lesson today tells us that the inclusion and care of children is a Christian thing. The lesson tells us that people had listened to Jesus and seen his healing ways and they brought their children close to him seeking a blessing. The people wanted good things for their children, they wanted them to be blessed but some in the crowd were focused only on their own needs, they didn't want Jesus to be distracted, they thought it was beneath Jesus to acknowledge the children. But Jesus rebuked them. These are the ones we need to pay attention, Jesus tells them – you cannot leave them out – in fact they are ones that the Kingdom of God belongs – if you want to know God then you have got to care for and include and bless the children.

We need to care about the earth and its creatures not only for ourselves but because of our children. We cannot throw our hands up and not care, we must keep trying.

This past weekend – on your behalf I baptized a little guy named Smith you can watch the service of Baptism today as it is attached to this worship. In Smith's baptism we acknowledge that he is part of a faith family that has, throughout history, persevered and come out the other side of some very challenging times.

We baptized Smith into a family that has made huge mistakes, taken lives and robbed livelihood and nation hood from dozens.

He is also a part of a family who continues to grow in its understanding of a generous and loving God and who on good days recognizes and takes responsibility for its mistakes and tries again.

In Smith's baptism we have affirmed that he and I and all of us are connected through water and the grace and love of God.

Friends we cannot give up on caring for this planet and its creatures for we are connected, woven together and Smith is counting on us.

I pray that you and I might have:

determination like that of the Women of the Grenadian co-op, resourcefulness like that of the goat farmers and the endurance of the banana crop farmers, as we work to care for the earth and all its creatures.

And may we be inspired and emboldened by our love for our children to not give up and may the wisdom of our God continue to break through our lethargy, our doubt and our fear. The future depends on it.

Hymn: "Love is the Touch"

Prayers of the People

And now once again I invite you to make a fist with your hands and imagine in those clenched fists are all the things that you are holding tightly: maybe its fear, anxiety, worry, grief, loneliness, helplessness. Or you might be thinking of a specific circumstance that is weighing heavy on you right now.

Now I invite you to slowly open your fists and imagine letting go...
letting go into the loving embrace of the Spirit...
the Spirit who receives and transforms all things.

As we let go and open up, may our hands and our hearts be ready to hold, with love, the concerns of others and the pain of the world.

And so we pray now for the world...

We pray for all your people God who are struggling right now. for those who are sick... those struggling with their mental health... those who are grieving, lonely, worried and afraid... for those fearful of their future – of the unknown. those struggling with addictions... we hold all your people God in love, trusting in your presence and in the hope you offer.

And we continue to pray for in the midst of this pandemic. We pray for everyone who is sick or supporting loved ones who are... may they find comfort in your healing love. We pray for the medical personnel... especially those working in hospitals – may they feel strengthened and sustained by your presence and by the love and support of all of us who are so grateful for their care. We pray too for all of those who have not been directly affected by the covid virus but are feeling the emotional and spiritual heaviness of living in this time of uncertainty and fear... of disappointment and heartache. May we all be filled with your spirit of patience... courage... and hope. May we all continue to challenge ourselves to look enthusiastically for the joy, the love and the life that is in us and all around us.

And as we edge now into fall... into a time of transition and change – a time when light dims earlier and creation begins to prepare for the coming cold, help us to remember your loving presence as it surrounds us, guides us and helps us prepare for what's to come. Some of us are excited by this change and some of us are challenged by it – some of us may be feeling a little of both. As we enter into this autumn time may the earlier setting of the sun remind us to take time to rest. May the brilliant colors of the leaves remind us of the wonder of your creation. May the steam of our breath in the cool morning air remind us that it is you who gives us the breath of life. May the harvest from the fields remind us of the abundance we have been given and the bounty we are to share with others.

I invite you to place your hands now on your heart and sit with God in just a moment of quiet... a time for us to lift up all those things difficult to put into words, but felt in the depths of our hearts...

Thank you God for receiving our prayers, for opening our hands and hearts... and for your love and compassion – holding us close, even while we are apart.

And we pray together now the prayer that Jesus taught as we sing together the Lord's Prayer.

Benediction:

As Jesus called the children to come to him and the disciples to follow him, we too have a calling,
a calling to live out the Word,
to be love and to do the work of Christ's church.
May we feel rooted by our faith in God,
inspired by the stories of Jesus,
and lifted by the Spirit who guides us along the way. Amen.