

# Drawn In: Living Out the Creative Life with God

## RE-INTEGRATE July 11, 2021

### WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

*We welcome you to this time of worship and as we do so, we acknowledge that McClure United Church stands on treaty 6 territory and homeland of the Metis Nation. We pay our respect to elders both past and present, wherever we find ourselves today. We also acknowledge our commitment as an Affirming Ministry of the United Church of Canada as we strive to be an open-minded, inclusive and welcoming place of worship. It is our hope that no matter your age, race, class, ability, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation, you will feel the warmth and blessing of God's love today. And we give thanks to God for this opportunity to gather together for worship, reflection, song and prayer. May you feel the God's blessing upon you today.*

Good morning everyone and welcome to the worship of God with McClure United Church. I am so grateful to be worshipping with you today – I look forward to the day when I will be able to actually SEE you worshipping with me – worshipping together... but it really helps me to feel connected knowing that the same God who is with me now here in the chapel at McClure – is also with each one of you wherever you may be.

I would like to say an extra thank you today for all of the guests who have been part of our “dreaming” series. It is beautiful to hear their stories and learn of how God is alive and at work in each of them as they find ways to live their passion – to live God's dream for them. So far we've heard from Joyce, Natasha, Ernie and Brooke and a today we will hear from Shannon. I've appreciated the opportunity to chat with each of them and I hope you've also enjoyed hearing them. I also wanted to say that if you have felt inspired by what they have shared and maybe its sparked a desire to share your own story, please let me know. We may not use it for a worship service, but its still important to share. I believe that speaking our passion – those gifts, desires, qualities that God has given to us – really helps bring them to life. And, I just really love hearing the stories.

So for announcements...

I am so touched by the additions to our Kindness Garden. I know many people are stopping and taking a piece of kindness with them – so please continue to paint or write a message on a small rock and bring it over for the garden. Or if you're needing a little kindness, please stop by and help yourself. I'd love to keep this going through the summer and into the fall. The world can always use more kindness.

And I just want to invite you again to our in person coffee time Friday at 10am. I, for one, am really excited to begin making those face to face connections again. So bring a chair if you have one... and I will have a few available for those without... and your coffee or tea or water... and come on by the church. If it is too hot or too rainy we'll move it indoors to the multipurpose room.

Debra is back in just over a week now... her first day back is July 19. I know I'm not the only one very excited to have her back with us. I can tell by the notes that have been arriving to welcome her back. Please keep sending them in... you have one more week. You can mail them or drop them in the mailbox and we'll be sure they get to her.

And I think that's all I have for today. Please check your email for the weekly updates and activities in case there is anything I've missed.

And so now let's prepare ourselves for worship – breathe deeply of God's love – allowing it to ground us and open our hearts and our minds. Let us 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)*

Everything that is created is in relationship with all other things. God's vision for birds had to do with the quality of the creation of air. How a song is experienced by those who sing it will change the composer's perception of the song or even the song itself. Nothing exists in isolation. So too for our relationships with others. What happens for humanity is closely related to how we respond to each other. Are we willing to re-integrate, re-vise, re-vision our lives as we come in contact with others who are not like us? New possibilities await if we are willing to offer ourselves fully and be willing to be changed by our interactions.

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:  
Re-integrating God,  
you created us for relationship with you and others.  
Open us to be changed as we encounter the diversity of your children.  
Draw us into your love.  
Give us the courage to reach out in love.  
Amen.

## **OPENING SONG: Born in Song – Shirley Blackburn**

### **SCRIPTURE**

*1 Corinthians 12:12-19*

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be?”

### **REFLECTION**

In March of 2020, when everything shut down, we had no idea how to be the church without a building... and without the ability to be face-to-face... to do the things we'd always done.

The leadership team quickly met – named a couple of priorities... like getting worship online and checking in with our most vulnerable people... and then we just started moving – we needed to very quickly learn basic technology in order to offer worship – we needed to learn this thing called Zoom – and we needed to figure out a system to contact everyone on our member list to check in.

The transition didn't happen smoothly and it certainly wasn't easy... but we did it – and we learned along the way. We tried some things, evaluated, and tried something new or built on what seemed to be working. Over time we were able to add on to our original plan – with mid-week reflections, youth groups, children's programs, small group discussions and Bible studies...and more advanced uses of technology for creative worship things like the Christmas and Easter pageants, the confirmation service and Zoom communion.

We sprinted out of the pandemic gate with a basic plan that has grown and evolved into what feels like a pretty smooth and expanded version of “being the church”. We have learned so much along the way – much of which I am hoping will stay with us as we consider what it means to be going back to “normal”... or, as I prefer– moving forward to a new normal.

So one lesson I learned is that sometimes the process that moves us forward in life is not “Ready. Set. Go!” but “Ready. Go! Set.” Sometimes it is just easier to steer something once its already in motion. Sometimes we need to get the process going before we can refine it enough to see it moving smoothly. We start... we observe what happens... we make adjustments... observe some more.. make more adjustments... and we just keep at it until we've got it right.

In our series thus far, we have explored the processes of Dreaming, of Hovering, of Risking, and of Listening. This week, we're looking at the fifth stage at that's Reintegrating.

Applying this process to the pandemic experience, we could say that the Dream was to respond to the pandemic shut down in a faithful way. Hovering was the process of gathering with the leadership team to talk it through. Risking was turning on the video camera.. or the Zoom call.. and just doing what needed to get done. Listening was the process of gathering information about what was happening... hearing the feedback... observing social media. And Reintegrating was the process of taking all that information and feedback from our actual experiences and making adjustments until the Dream became reality. Ready. Go! Set.

A church is little more than a community of people who have come together to live God's Dream for themselves and for God's world. We spend a lot of time Hovering—discerning God's specific call for our lives as individuals and as a community of faith. Then in community we take risks to follow the path we find ourselves on and sometimes we discover a major difference between theory and reality once we have Risked ourselves in following a call.

Despite the best-laid plans and the most careful discernment, church jam-ups are inevitable. Things don't go as planned. Maybe feelings get hurt or egos get bruised and people often start looking for something... or someone... to blame.

If these jam-ups go unchecked... even a healthy church can become divided. This is when gossip starts flows freely among the divisions. And because the divisions are only talking to each other, you start hearing things like “well, everyone I talk to agrees with me”. Each division becomes more certain that they are right... others are wrong and pretty soon, no one is listening to other viewpoints. They’re just trying to ram through whatever agenda their group feels is the right one. Everyone is trying to win.

Sound fun?!

Well this is exactly what was going on in Corinth when Paul wrote to the church he had founded there. Paul had founded the Corinthian church during his second missionary Journey—the meandering road we talked about last week. During the two years he spent there, the new community thrived and grew strong. Paul had helped them dream God’s Dream for themselves and for the world. He had helped them discern God’s calling for their church—the specific ways that they could help heal the hurts of the world. He had set them moving down their path. Then he left.

And all hell broke loose. Literally!

The theory didn’t match the lived experience. Jams happened. Divisions began growing. And before long, some church members were proclaiming themselves to be followers of Paul. Others were followers of Peter and others were followers of another Christian missionary named Apollos.

So there.. in the midst of this mess, Paul asked who the followers of Jesus were.

Paul reminded his Corinthian community that being a follower of Jesus is a lot like being part of a body. A head doesn’t serve itself. It serves the body. A foot doesn’t serve the foot, or even the leg. It serves the body. Each part of the body is important. Each has a unique role to play. And each is going to experience the life of the body a little differently.

This analogy becomes critical when a church actually takes risks to follow God’s Dream and then discovers that the theory doesn’t match their reality. Inevitably, the church will stumble around a bit, like the Corinthians did. And inevitably, people will interpret that stumbling as a sign that the church is failing in its mission. But exactly the opposite is happening. Any church that takes up its calling to live God’s Dream in the world will stumble around because it’s following God’s Dream. Ready. Go! Set.

Now if I were to literally take a step forward on a particular path and discover that I have set my foot down on a slippery slope rather than solid ground, I would need to use my whole body—not just part of it—to correct myself. My eyes would begin to search around for where my next step should be. My arms would take an active role in correcting my balance. My leg and my foot would move in response to where my eyes and my brain have figured out the next safe landing spot. All of it needs to work

together. If each part were working for itself and not for the good of the whole... all I would do is land on my butt.

Paul encouraged the Corinthian congregation to remember the whole. The body they are a part of isn't just any body. It's the body of Christ. So, what he told them was this... "as you stumble around your path, it doesn't matter who is right and who is wrong. You are now living for a relationship, not just for yourselves. There CAN NOT be winners and losers. There can be no "my way or the highway." No one person or one group of people or one committee or one program or one way of living God's love is more valuable than any of the others.

What we ought to value are the things that Christ valued.. things like justice, mercy, love. Things like feeding the hungry... welcoming the stranger... caring for the sick and the imprisoned. Things like worshipping God in the most whole-hearted way we can and being creative about how we live God's dream for us.. and for the world.

A major part of this Reintegrating process is remembering that we don't base our assessment of how well the church is living God's Dream on the fact that it stumbles around from time to time. We base our assessment on how well we act— how well we react — together, as a body - when the going gets tough... and the going will always get tough when we are taking risks in response to God's dream.

Now I know that this understanding of being part of a body... can be really challenging for some. Sometimes fear of making ourselves vulnerable keeps us isolated or guarded... it keeps us from connecting with the other parts – parts we really need in order to create the love that this world so desperately needs.

But we really are made for each other, we are made for relationship... for community. We only have to choose to say "yes" to God's invitation to participate fully in the life and in the love of community.

And look... we have such an amazing opportunity right here before us as we begin to take steps out of pandemic restrictions. We get to enter into this creative process again – from the start – Dreaming, Hovering, Risking, Listening and Re-Integrating – who we want to be – who we are called to be as a community of faith. And the same is true for each of us individually. What is God's dream for each of us as we enter journey along the post-pandemic path?

## **Drawn In Interview**

### **PASTORAL PRAYERS/LORD'S PRAYER**

O God, with unhindered generosity your Spirit blesses our spirits; your love embraces our lives; your care maintains our existence. May we be generous, too, giving you our lives, day by day, and supporting the work of your spirit in the world. You plant the seed of hope within us, God. Nurture hope in the hearts of everyone who today faces despair or discouragement.

You plant the seed of courage with our spirits. Strengthen that impulse in all who face fear, whether in a palliative care ward, a line up at the food bank, a shelter for abused women, or a refugee camp.

You plant the seed of righteousness. Encourage that yearning for justice in all who seek to be your disciples today.

You plant the seed of honesty. Bring to flower in our lives the virtue of seeking and speaking truth, even when the truth brings disruption and disorientation for a time. Make us alert to the lies of the powerful which control and manipulate the lives of the powerless, whom Jesus loved so deeply and whom he wished to protect.

You plant within us the possibility that each of us may become more fully your child.

You plant the possibility that our communities may become more like your beloved community. Nourish these seeds of possibility that we may bear fruit that blesses all our relations.

O God, you pour out your Spirit of wholeness on all creation. We lift up in prayer all who are in special need of your healing presence this day....

Bring to fruition, we pray, all your purposes in our lives and in the life of the world.

And now we pray together the prayer that Jesus taught his friends... Our Father/Mother

## **HYMN: God Who Gives to Life Its Goodness – Shirley Blackburn**

### **BLESSING**

I invite you 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  
in all you are and all you do.

### **SUNG BLESSING**