

WE GATHER

**Welcome, Life and Work of the Church
Lighting of the Christ Candle
Acknowledgement of the Land**

Call to Worship:

We gather to renew our commitment to our future
We give ourselves to this present moment
knowing that our choices,
no matter how small,
resonate with Jesus across the Living Cosmos.
We are alive in God—
Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit.
Thanks be to God. Amen

Opening Hymn: "Let there be Light" VU#679

LET THERE BE LIGHT

- 1 Let there be light,
let there be understanding,
let all the nations gather,
let them be face to face;

- 2 open our lips,
open our minds to ponder,
open the door of concord
opening into grace;

- 3 perish the sword,
perish the angry judgement,
perish the bombs and hunger,
perish the fight for gain;

- 4 hallow our love,
hallow the deaths of martyrs,
hallow their holy freedom,
hallowed be your name;

5 your kingdom come,
your spirit turn to language,
your people speak together,
your spirit never fade; (continued)

6 let there be light; 679
open our hearts to wonder,
perish the way of terror,
hallow the world God made.

Prayer of Approach:

Heart of our hearts, Mind of our minds,
your love for us and all creation exceeds our capacity to imagine.
We open now to the mystery of Your life in Christ,
infinitely greater than words can express
and holding all beings in intimate embrace.
We know we are on a journey into in our own depths—
and forward to the new life which is being born through us in this very moment.
We celebrate this in the name of Jesus,
our Wisdom and our Way. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer (unison) Paraphrase VU p.916

WE LISTEN

Scripture: Romans 12:1-8

Leader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church

Response: Thanks be to God.

Gradual Hymn: "Deep in Our Hearts" MV 154

Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;
Deep in our hearts there is a common song;
Deep in our hearts there is a common story,
telling Creation that we are one.

Deep in our hearts there is a common purpose;
Deep in our hearts there is a common goal;

Deep in our hearts there is a sacred message,
justice and peace in harmony.

Deep in our hearts there is a common longing;
Deep in our hearts there is a common theme;
Deep in our hearts there is a common current,
flowing to freedom like a stream.

Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;
Deep in our hearts there is a common song;
Deep in our hearts there is a common story,
telling Creation that we are one.

Sermon: Being Transformed

The sermon offered on June 10th, 1925 during the inauguration of the United Church of Canada highlighted Jesus' image of the dying of wheat seeds in order to give birth to the fruits of a new harvest. The emphasis was upon the pain and suffering of the letting go that might be necessary as a part of this dying for the sake of new life. 90 years later, Phyllis Airhart, in a recent essay published in the United Church Observer to commemorate the founding of the United Church of Canada¹ wondered if the United Church of Canada has had a death wish ever since. She asks "Do we still believe that something vital is in the making?" In response I would like to suggest that what the United Church of Canada has displayed over and over again is a strong and vital birth wish--and as we know (ask anyone who has given birth) sometimes the throes of birth pangs can bring us to the brink of what seems like certain death. As in the case of the seed there must be a letting go and a dying wherein the old form has to break open and be left behind in order for the new vitality to be released. This dying and rising is a holy mystery that is at the heart of what we are learning from science about life and it is at the heart of what we believe about Jesus.

¹ June 2015 edition of The United Church Observer

I believe that for these past 90 years of our existence the United Church of Canada has been going through an often messy process of dying to the old ways of Christendom and being reborn (or you could say transformed” into a Spirit-filled movement of faithful human beings following a path opened up by the life of Jesus Christ. It has been a painful yet life-giving process of recognizing the reality that many of the fondly held ideas underlying the founding of the United Church of Canada as a national church were rooted in a colonial, patriarchal world view that is woven into the very social fabric of the Christianity bequeathed to us and practiced by our forefathers and foremothers in thousands of little ways—a Christianity that raised us and a Christianity that has nothing to do with the Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday, today and forever!

As a church dedicated to “serving this present age” the United Church of Canada has been willing to risk the difficult conversations to uncover long-held and rigidly defended assumptions and move beyond them into new and uncharted realms. We have been going through the process of being, to use a good old evangelical term, “born again”²

It is my conviction that the seed that was planted in 1925, and continues to be planted over and over again the way good seed must, is a Spirit of inclusivity and acceptance of diversity that has steadily grown out of the coming together of the differences between the founding churches. At the very beginning of our life as a church, this “inclusive Christian fellowship”³ was put to the test in the new church when the matter of women’s ordination was brought to the fore in 1926. It took ten years of vigorous and sometimes very

² Phyllis D. Airhart, *A Church with the Soul of a Nation: Making and Remaking the United Church of Canada*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014 Prologue p.xx

³ From a declaration made during the tenth year celebration and included in The United Church Manual ever since. The Manual 2013 p. 10

painful debate for the question “Do you approve of the ordination of women?” to be finally put to the vote in every congregation and passed easily in 1934 so that the Basis of Union was amended to read “God calls “men and women” to the ministry of Word and Sacraments.

The inclusion of women has opened up a 90 year exploration of inclusivity within the church. Gender and gender justice issues have touched every aspect of the ministry and mission of the United Church--for questions about the place of women arouse all manner of concerns about the proper ordering of society through marriage, sexuality, family, children, questions about human rights and all the social justice issues surrounding women and children also emerge. Whenever I hear a disgruntled church member react, when faced with the latest church statement about the inclusion of members of the LGBTTTQ community, “This all started with you women!” I know in my heart that it is true and while painful on so many levels, I also know that it is right and good. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever.

Many feel the church is being destroyed by these birthpangs of new life. I believe it is being transformed to meet the needs of our times and Jesus’ vision of a world filled with God’s love. I have realized that Christianity is a permanent revolution, a state of being in which we believers must challenge our preconceptions every moment of every day and as St. Paul wrote long ago we must not be “conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds.” Amen. May it be so brothers and sisters.

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WE RESPOND

**OFFERING INVITATION:
DOXOLOGY VU 540**

Grant us, God, the grace of giving,

with a spirit large and free,
that ourselves and all our living
we may offer faithfully.

DEDICATION OF THE OFFERING

Prayers of the People:

CLOSING HYMN: Go Make a Difference MV# 209

Refrain

Go make a diff'rence.

We can make a diff'rence.

Go make a diff'rence in the world.

Go make a diff'rence.

We can make a diff'rence.

Go make a diff'rence in the world.

Verse 1

**We are the salt of the earth, called to let the people see
the love of God for you and me. We are the light of the world,
not to be hidden but be seen.**

Go make a diff'rence in the world.

Verse 2

**We are the hands of Christ reaching out to those in need,
the face of God for all to see.**

We are the spirit of hope;

we are the voice of peace.

Go make a diff'rence in the world.

Verse 3

So let your love shine on,

let it shine for all to see.

Go make a diff'rence in the world.

And the sprit of Christ

will be with us as we go.

Go make a diff'rence in the world.

BLESSING:

**May the love of the Holy One enfold you
May the labour of the Birthing One deliver you
May the wisdom of the Wild One Sustain you
And May the peace of the All in One
Sustain you
Bless you
And guide you home. Amen**

SUMMER CHURCH IN MUSKOKA

- Sept 3 Sunday of Labour Day Weekend
- Sept 4 **New Muskoka KAIROS group TBA**
- Sept 10 **CHANGE OF LOB CIRCUIT SCHEDULE**
Knox United, Dorset– 9:00 a.m.
Stewart Memorial, Dwight – 10:15 a.m.
Pioneer Memorial, Hillside– 11:30 a.m.

Stewardship is participation in God's Work

There are several different options for you to make your offering to Lake of Bays Pastoral Charge.1. In person and on the plate. (Each congregation has a different practice around this but you can't miss it!)2. Via PAR (preauthorized remittance). Then you don't have to think about it again. Money is withdrawn monthly 3. By e-transfer. The email address for donations via e-transfer is lobunited-churches@gmail.com In the subject line/comment please identify to which of the Churches you wish to donate, 4. By cheque: If you send a cheque, please make it out to Lake of Bays Pastoral Charge and mail it to: LOB United Churches, P.O. Box 196, Dwight, ON, P0A 1H0, specifying for which church the donation is intended. Thank you.

**Sunday Worship, August 27, 2023
Summer Series on Creation Spirituality
Path Fou: VIA TRANSFORMATIVA**

**LAKE OF BAYS PASTORAL CHARGE
Pioneer, Hillside – 9:00 a.m.
Stewart Memorial, Dwight – 10:15 a.m.
Knox, Dorset – 11:30 a.m.**

Minister: Rev Meg Jordan (705-789-6600) jordanm@vianet.ca
lakeofbayspastoralcharge196@gmail.com
Bookkeeper/Administrator: Linda Pinkerton
Leadership Chair: Jennifer Parker
Musician, Knox: Cynthia MacLean

