



“Called by God, as disciples of Jesus, The United Church of Canada seeks to be a bold, connected, evolving church of diverse, courageous, hope-filled communities united in deep spirituality, inspiring worship, and daring justice.”

LAKE OF BAYS PASTORAL CHARGE

Faith communities of
Pioneer Memorial in Hillside,
Stewart Memorial in Dwight
Knox United in Dorset.

Shared Winter services in Pioneer Hall, 10:30 a.m.

**January 14, 2024
2nd Sunday after Epiphany**

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

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WE GATHER

Welcome

Family Life and Work

Acknowledgement of the Land

Lighting of the Christ Candle

Introit: **Behold, behold, I make all things new MV #115 2x**

Call to Worship: (responsive)

Welcome to this holy time which we create together.

We gather as a community with God and each other

We remember that we are of the earth.

We are one with all life

Let us breathe deeply as we open our minds and hearts to hear God's call.

Opening Hymn: Called by Earth and Sky MV#135

Called by earth and sky, promise of hope held high

**This is our sacred living trust, treasure of Life, sanctified
Called by earth and sky**

1. **Precious these waters endless seas, deep ocean's dream**

2. **Waters of healing, rivers of rain The wash of love again**

2. Precious this gift the air we breathe, wind born and free

Breath of the Spirit blown through this place Our gathering and our grace

3. Precious these mountains ancient sands, vast fragile land

Seeds of our waking rooted and strong Creation's faithful song

4. Precious the fire that lights the way, bright dawning day

Fire of passion sorrows undone Our faith and justice one

Prayer of Approach (unison)

Gentle and disturbing God,
you have called us to this place,
to be a community of faith.

In our struggles, hold us together;
in our celebrating, be our abundance;
in our serving, may we experience joy.

Amen

WE LISTEN

Reading: Psalm 139 (selected verses)

Hymn: I Have Called You by Your Name MV#161

I have called you by your name, you are mine;

I have gifted you and ask you now to shine.

I will not abandon you;

all my promises are true.

You are gifted, called, and chosen; you are mine.

I will help you learn my name as you go;
read it written in my people, help them grow.
Pour the water in my name,
speak the word your soul can claim,
offer Jesus' body, given long ago.

I know you will need my touch as you go;
feel it pulsing in creation's ebb and flow.
Like the woman reaching out,
choosing faith in spite of doubt,
hold the hem of Jesus' robe, then let it go.

I have given you a name, it is mine;
I have given you my Spirit as a sign.
With my wonder in your soul,
make my wounded children whole;
go and tell my precious people they are mine.

Sermon/reflection: Known, Loved and Called

There is a well known prayer said by many people around the world. Here is the version from the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*:

*Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

The "collect" is primarily a twofold declaration and celebration — that God is both mysteriously infinite and personally intimate, that the Holy God who knows me also loves me. Another way of saying "We are not alone." It expresses the paradoxical combination of confession that brings liberation combined with divine comfort that

brings consolation. In other words, I am both nakedly revealed before the infinite God, and lovingly sheltered by God's intimate love.

Psalm 139 is like that. Yes, God is infinite, but God is also "intimately acquainted with all my ways." Whether I feel it or not, whether I believe it or not, I'm always safe in the presence of God's Spirit: "If I go up to the heavens you are there; / if I make my bed in the depths, you are there." Instead of feeling like a demographic accident among eight billion people, every person can say, "you created my inmost being; / you knit me together in my mother's womb. / When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, / your eyes saw my unformed body."

In his book *Wishful Thinking*, Frederick Buechner calls Psalm 139 "the secret prayer of us all." The psalm is about "hiding and baring our secrets," writes Buechner. In his own journey, that meant, among other things, discovering the healing presence of God even in his father's alcoholism and suicide, and in his daughter's severe struggle with anorexia.

When Buechner gave the Noble Lectures at Harvard in the winter of 1969, he articulated what became the hallmark of his life work — the conviction that if God speaks to us at all, it is in the everyday events of an ordinary life. For Buechner, the "humdrum events of our lives," as he called them, are an alphabet through which God spells out his words and meaning to us.

In a much-quoted passage from his book *Now and Then*, he articulated how both his fiction and his four memoirs had the same goal:

"By examining as closely and as candidly as I could the life that had come to seem to me in many ways a kind of trap or dead-end

street, I discovered that it really wasn't that at all. I discovered that if you really keep your eye peeled to it and your ears open, if you really pay attention to it, even such a limited and limiting life as the one I was living on Rupert Mountain opened up onto extraordinary vistas. Taking your children to school and kissing your wife good-bye. Eating lunch with a friend. Trying to do a decent day's work. Hearing the rain patter against the window. There is no event so commonplace but that God is present within it, always hiddenly, always leaving you room to recognize him or not to recognize him, but all the more fascinatingly because of that, all the more compellingly and hauntingly. In writing those lectures and the book they later turned into, it came to seem to me that if I were called upon to state in a few words the essence of everything I was trying to say both as a novelist and as a preacher, it would be something like this: listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery that it is. In the boredom and pain of it no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace. What I started trying to do as a writer and as a preacher was more and more to draw on my own experience not just as a source of plot, character, illustration, but as a source of truth."

Like the poet in Psalm 139, listen to the mystery of your life. Pay attention. Be still and know that God is present. Before him, all hearts are open, all desires known, and from him no secrets are hidden. As Buechner put it in *The Sacred Journey*, "He says he is with us on our journeys. He says he has been with us since each of our journeys began. Listen for him. Listen to the sweet and bitter airs of your present and your past for the sound of him." Know with certainty that you are held fast by his love.

WE RESPOND

Offertory Hymn “Grant Us, God, the Grace of Giving” 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.

Offertory/Prayer of Dedication

Prayers of the People

Gracious and Holy God,
with hearts full of gratitude and hope and longing and concern
We open to your healing and creative power.
We are a people who live our lives within a story of your Spirit
as a hidden wholeness coursing
through your wondrous universe to which we all have access.
For this we give you thanks.

With gratitude we open ourselves
to the sacred flow of your birthing power.
We give you thanks for every goodness in our lives,
for your presence within us and around us,
for the freedoms we share and the opportunities that lie before us.
Hear now our prayers for ourselves and our world
May they be not only sounds on our lips but actions in our lives.
We acknowledge our feelings of despair over the seemingly end-
less acts of senseless violence in our world,
we pray earnestly for peace-- in our own hearts

In our homes,
in our communities
and between the nations of our world. (Silence.)

Especially we remember those who have had to flee their homes
and are seeking refuge wherever they can. We pray for all
who have recently entered this country as refugees, in particu-
lar, those who will be coming to live with us in this communi-

ty. Help us to act with the compassion and generosity you have begotten in us.

WE pray for all who are living with poverty and ecological disaster, and all those who are struggling with their lives to resist evil and promote justice in our world. We pray for those whom we know about and those who struggle on silently without our knowledge. In particular we pray for the indigenous peoples of our world and of Canada. May we learn to walk in new paths of friendship and respect and reconciliation together.

(Silence)

We pray for those within our own community who are suffering in mind, body or spirit, those who cannot be with us today due to illness or disability

We remember:

Silence:

We pray for those who mourn the death of loved ones and those who are facing death themselves. Surround them with your loving care now as we name them in our hearts. (Silence)

O God we pray with all our hearts for this good earth and for all those who are acting on her behalf. May their faithful actions be fruitful in bringing healing and wholeness to your whole creation.

We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ-- our hope and our way.

Closing Hymn: Soil of God You and I. MV#174

*“Soil of God, you and I, stand ready to bear
Seeds of faith nourished by God’s tender care.
Growing in everyone for here God is found.
All stand together, we are...
Holy ground.*

*Soil of God, you and I, now ready to be
Part of God’s promise, for others to see.
Open to everyone for here God is found.
All stand together, we are...
Holy ground.*

*Soil of God, you and I, now called to rebirth,
Joining as partners with all of the earth.
Living in harmony for here God is found.
All stand together, this is...
Holy ground.”*

Commissioning and Benediction

As you leave this place
may the Spirit of God go with you;
Behind you, to encourage you,
Beside you, to befriend you,
above you, to watch over you,
before you, to lead you, and
Deep within you,
to give you peace,
now and always Amen

Choral Benediction: May the God of Hope Go With Us VU#424

1 May the God of hope go with us every day,
filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
bringing light and hope to every land and race.

Praying, let us work for peace,
singing, share our joy with all,
working for a world that's new,
faithful when we hear Christ's call.

- 2 May the God of healing free the earth from fear,
freeing us for peace, both treasured and pursued.
May the God of love keep our commitment clear
to a world restored, to human life renewed. R

Calendar of upcoming Events

TODAY	Epiphany 2 Worship Team Meeting after lunch
Jan 17	Coffee & Conversation ZOOM 10.am-11am M&P luncheon meeting to evaluate Rev Meg's first year Leadership Team Meeting 1-3 pm,
Jan 18	Community Healing Prayer Ministry 6:30 to 8 p.m. Pre-registration cathyferrenrhn@gmail.com .
Jan 21	Epiphany 3 Worship LOB Congregational Mtg
Jan 25	Monthly Circle Dance 6:30 - 8 p.m.
Jan 28	Epiphany 4 Worship
Feb 4	Epiphany 5 Worship
Feb 11	Transfiguration Sunday-Communion
Feb 13	Shrove Tuesday Pancake Luncheon 11:30 am 1:30 p.m. LENTEN STUDY BOOK AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE.
Feb 14	ASH WEDNESDAY beginning of Lent .
Feb 25	First Sunday in Lent.

Ongoing Stewardship: There are several different options for you to gift 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 lobunitedchurches@gmail.com In the subject line/comment please identify to which of the Churches you wish to donate, Pioneer in Hillside, Stewart in Dwight or Knox in Dorset.
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

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