



**Sunday Worship, October 15, 2023**  
**LAKE OF BAYS PASTORAL CHARGE**  
**Knox, Dorset – 9:00 a.m.**  
**Stewart Memorial, Dwight – 10:15 a.m.**  
**Pioneer, Hillside– 11:30 a.m.**

Minister: Rev Meg Jordan (705-789-6600) [jordanm@vianet.ca](mailto:jordanm@vianet.ca)  
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Leadership Chair: Jennifer Parker  
Musician, Knox: Cynthia MacLean

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**WE GATHER**

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

## Acknowledgement of the Land

### Call to Worship:

Come, let us gather to hear an evolving story  
of God's love.

**In this sacred space,  
we give ourselves to the present moment,  
laying aside all worries and concerns  
entering into the now of God's Wisdom,  
the great I AM, God's active and eternal presence.  
Amen**

### Opening Hymn: – **God of the Bible MV #28**

God of the Bible, God in the Gospel,  
hope seen in Jesus, hope yet to come,  
you are our centre, daylight or darkness,  
freedom or prison, you are our home.

Refrain: (repeat 2 times)

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,  
God always faithful, you do not change.

God in our struggles, God in our hunger,  
suffering with us, taking our part,  
still you empow'r us, mothering Spirit,  
feeding, sustaining, from your own heart. R.

Those without status, those who are nothing,  
you have made royal, gifted with rights,  
chosen as partners, midwives of justice,  
birthing new systems, lighting new lights R.

Not by your finger, not by your anger

will our world order change in a day,  
but by your people, fearless and faithful,  
small paper lanterns, lighting the way. R.

Hope we must carry, shining and certain  
through all our turmoil, terror and loss,  
bonding us gladly one to the other,  
till our world changes facing the Cross.

Shirley Erena Murray, 1995

**Prayer of Approach:**

Leader: We come with hope and expectation.

**All: We bring our heart's desire.**

Leader: We come with the longing in our souls

**All: We bring our hunger for life**

Leader: We come seeking God's Wisdom.

**All: We bring all our questions,  
all our doubts  
We bring all our hopes,  
all our dreams.**

WE LISTEN

**Scripture:** Philippians 4:1-9

**Leader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church**

**Response: Thanks be to God.**

**Gradual Hymn: For listening only**

**Pslam 23 by Bobby McFerrin (dedicated to his mother)**

## Sermon:

### Help These Women Notes for a Sermon based on Philippians 4:1-9

When the United Church of Canada was formed in 1925 there were only two Methodist women delegates present to sign the Basis of Union since most church women did not have a place or a voice in the courts of their respective congregations. This mirrored the status of women in the larger society where under the British North America Act, women in the Dominion of Canada were considered “persons in matters of pains and penalties but not persons in matters of rights and privileges.” In 1920 the Dominion Elections Act was amended to include eligible women over the age of 21 but it was all very new and having the right to vote men into office didn’t help their situation at all. So in an effort to enable women themselves to seek political office, a group of women, now called “The Famous Five”, which included a very active member of the United Church of Canada called Nellie McClung, petitioned the Supreme Court of Canada for a decision on the question of whether women are “persons” according to the British North America Act of (1867). The question presented to the Supreme Court was “*Does the word "persons" in Section 24, of the British North America Act, 1867, include female persons?*” On March 14, 1928 the answer came. Five judges of the Supreme Court of Canada decided that a woman is not a "qualified person" and therefore cannot be appointed to the Senate of Canada.

Nellie McClung and her friends refused to take no for an answer and took their case to The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in England (Canada’s final Court of Appeal at the time). The Privy Council overturned the decision of the Canadian Supreme Court’s “Persons” case and on October 18th, 1928 recognized Canadian women as persons under the law.

All this was only three years after the founding of the United Church of Canada. Most Canadian women within the churches prior to union and after it had essentially given up all hope of trying to be included in the courts of the main body of the church and had simply turned their considerable energy and devotion towards organizing their own parallel organizations within which they developed leadership skills, raised funds, recruited volunteers and supported missionaries both at home and abroad. The women’s missionary societies of all three founding churches simply joined together at union and in 1926 the Women’s Missionary Society of the United Church of Canada was formed. Phyllis Airhart points out that the national church inherited a tremendous asset through these “local missionary educators (who) were well positioned to promote ideas that were current in ecumenical circles...Historians have wondered how the social ideals of national denominational leaders were communicated so well to local congregations.” Airhart goes on to say “Perhaps a clue lies in the organizational structure of these missionary societies with their connections to women (and therefore men) in local congregations.<sup>1</sup>”

There was no discussion on the floor of GC42 about the UCW proposals. The details around the make up of the executive committees of the regional and denominational councils was left undecided and referred to the current General Council Executive to complete. I had a chance to speak briefly with Phyllis Buchner, current President of the National UCW who was attending the council as a commissioner from Hamilton conference.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.85-86

She told me that she was encouraged that the question of UCW representation hadn't been rejected outright. There was still hope. She then went on to tell me with great excitement about an initiative which the General Council Executive had asked the National UCW to take on as a project—"The Child Wellbeing Initiative." This, to me, was an example of where the hearts of these women really are—full of eagerness and hope for the mandate of Jesus and the continuing work and the mission of the church.

The UCW today has some wonderful opportunities to participate wholeheartedly in the emergence of new life in the United Church of Canada. I was struck when I read that Elder Lorna Standingready of the All Native Circle Conference invited the church to remember "the late Ida Drake, a missionary (WMS) to the Indians on the File Hills Reserve more than 60 years ago." As Lorna described it "She paved the way of the Lord our Creator to the Indians by living on the reserve with them and accepting their way of living in harmony with nature. It is this respect, acknowledgment, and acceptance of the Indian's culture and the teachings of the Bible that continue to be passed on to the Indians by their own people..."<sup>2</sup> For me Lorna's words are a testament to what was truly at the heart of the work done by the WMS—the building of community through loving, respectful relationships! As a First Nations woman (or Indian as she puts it) Lorna witnessed to this when she said. "You can have all the right words in the world but if you don't have a respectful personal relationship it is nothing." This small elderly First Nations woman was participating in a discussion around building just relationships within the Palestine/Israel conflict. She was reacting to a speaker who wanted to make sure the relationship building being encouraged should be more than just personal. For Lorna the personal is all there is. And in that moment I understood a little more about the feminist teaching: "The personal is political." In fact, I am beginning to wonder if this isn't at the heart of the antipathy being expressed by some towards the idea of the UCW having a voice. Let's face it. For the UCW everything is personal. They have been organizing around the personal dimensions of life for a very long time.

In her book "Crossing Worlds: A History of the Women's Missionary Society of the United Church of Canada" Donna Sinclair digs deeply underneath the patriarchal words and the evangelical piety to find what she believes the UCW still has to offer the church — a profound trust that God's Spirit works through relationships and through all the little things and moments that go into nurturing them. And because Donna writes from a feminist perspective in 1992, she yearns for the UCW to claim their personal womanly ways of doing things as strengths for the sake of the whole church and for the sake of the world. In the Epilogue of "Crossing Worlds" she calls for the UCW to lead the church into more earth friendly and soul friendly ways in order to meet the hunger of the world.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately I do not think there are many in leadership within the UCW today who are familiar with this wonderful work of love and truth-telling (Donna doesn't avoid the bad stuff) which was commissioned to celebrate 30 years of the UCW and to preserve the stories and wisdom of those who went before.

Much of what the WMS had developed in the way they conducted their official business was based on "women's ways of doing things"—more rooted in specific relationships and particular unique circumstances than in universal rules and regulations. With amalgamation of WMS and WA and the moving of mission work to "head office" this personal way of doing things was lost. Not only that, the female personnel who had been heavily involved in the work of mission were slowly eased out of positions of leadership. "Women were assigned to such boards as those of Social Services, and Christian Education. They were assured that they were not being shut out of the seats of authority and were being "adequately represented" on the boards and the courts of the church as originally agreed upon. Looking back, however, the assurance of that claim may be challenged. The Board of Women did not develop as the planners had hoped, and in 1972 it vanished altogether with reorganization of the national church into Divisions. The changes have been dramatic: in less than twenty years...offices involved with women's organizations had been reduced from one whole

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<sup>2</sup> A Prayer Resource for General Council 42, Behold I Make All Things New p.21

<sup>3</sup> Donna Sinclair, Crossing Worlds: The Story of the Woman's Missionary Society of the United Church of Canada, The United Church Publishing House, c. 1992

floor (the 5th floor at 85 St. Clair Ave) to one half-time person at the national level.”<sup>4</sup> And now they have been assimilated into the broad category of Church in Mission or Communities in Mission sharing a staff person whose responsibilities run the gamut from children to youth to all adult groups including women.

Clearly there has been a huge loss of status for United Church Women and whatever promises were made at the amalgamation of WMS with WA to form the UCW have long been forgotten. Indeed, this history as compiled and put together in story form by Donna Sinclair does not seem to be very well known in church circles at all. I made it a practice to ask almost every member of the United Church Women whether they are familiar with Donna’s book and almost always it is unknown.

Frankly I think that there should be a second edition of “Crossing Worlds” published with a new Forward to bring the history up to date and frame the whole story within the context of our current struggles to understand our relationship with land and our relationships with the first people’s of this land for whom women as “life bearers” hold a very special place. Because of the UCWs faithfulness over the years in embracing the mission themes of the national church every two or three years<sup>5</sup> and because of their compassion for the women and children of the world who still live within the throes of patriarchal dominance and systemic poverty, the UCW has been a strong advocate for the mission and service of the church—both financially and prayerfully. They have participated in Beads of Hope to support grandmothers in Africa living with HIV, Sisters in Spirit, a campaign to bring honour and respect to missing and murdered Aboriginal women, United for Peace, a campaign that encouraged congregations and groups to learn about and support actions to address a number of issues including gender violence, children affected by violence, religion, and ethnicity—and now “Bread not Stones” a campaign to end child poverty in Canada and around the world.

As an organization within the United Church of Canada that has a network of relationships across the church at every level the UCW is well positioned to make themselves available for “the mending of the world” and to ask with God “Where does my creation need mending today?” In summary, I quote the writer Donna Sinclair who says “The land to which we belong is speaking...I am willing now, at seventy, to live with the pain of the land, for his sake (her grandson) and for all the grandchildren, everywhere. We must. Because unless we remember that the land is holy, that it is our mother and loves us deeply, we are lost as a species.”<sup>6</sup> Since working on the history of the Women’s Missionary Society in 1992, Donna has become a fierce activist and advocate for the earth. From women to earth—it is a continuum that cannot be denied. This connection to and love for earth is the common ground that will bring together all the different cultural and faith groups that compose our modern Canadian society and I believe that women can lead the way in providing sacred spaces within which all can find a place of belonging. And just as our foremothers and fathers believed they were serving the present age by Christianizing the society, now--for the sake of the world we all inhabit, we can help one another find our place within God’s Shalom through right relationships. In the words of the great contemporary preacher Barbara Brown Taylor : “While we fuss over our church budgets and the salvation of our own souls, God is in the labour and delivery room with a world in travail wondering where all the help has gone.”<sup>7</sup>

I can hear the women of the UCW saying: “We are here and we want to help with the delivery of new life in our world. We are not your “church lady” anymore. We do not simply accept the role of being hospice workers for a church that is dying. What we are called to do is continue our work of wit-

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<sup>4</sup> “Women’s Work” in the United Church of Canada” by Marilyn Fardig Whiteley. Touchstone 17 (May 2002)

<sup>5</sup> Ordinary Heroes: Celebrating United Church Women 2012 The United Church of Canada ed. Noelle Boughton

<sup>6</sup> Donna Sinclair, Connected to the Land, Woodlake Books Publishing, Nov 21, 2014

<sup>7</sup> A Prayer Resource for General Council 42, Behold I Make All Things New p.18

ness, study, fellowship and service in order to support those in our world, both men and women who are acting as midwives for the new birth—the very messy, very complicated, very personal new birth that is happening right now in our midst.” I fervently pray that it may be so.

## 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:

Creator God,

We give thanks for the traditions and faithfulness of all who have gone before us, that provide good soil for us to grow deep roots.

We give thanks for the creative energy of new ideas and unfamiliar ways, that push us to grow in unexpected (and sometimes uncomfortable!) directions.

As we lean into **Deep Spirituality**, engaging with new ideas and unleashing our creative spirit, may we not rush to throw out everything old, but have the wisdom to value existing ways that continue to serve us well.

As we step into **Bold Discipleship**, seeking to follow Jesus’ invitation to go and share the good news, may we do so humbly and with compassion, seeking to be in relationship with—not over—one another and all of creation.

As we strive toward **Daring Justice**, may those of us with power and privilege have the courage and compassion to not only stand in solidarity with those of us who are oppressed, but to dismantle the systems of oppression in which we participate.

May it be so. Amen.

—Anne Hoganson

**CLOSING HYMN: Spirit Dancing VU# 388**

Spirit dancing on the waters,  
Sun reflecting song of grace  
Calling life to all the creatures,  
Giving life to human race.

Spirit dancing on the waters,  
Naming moment they should part,  
Giving freedom to the peoples,  
Signed for all in dancer's art.

Spirit dancing on the Waters  
paradox of womb and grave  
welcome now the Word child's coming  
no one prisoner no one slave

Spirit dancing on the waters  
can the dance by Cross be stilled  
Earth be shaken! Dead awaken!  
What was emptied shall be filled

Spirit dancing on the waters,  
Give your people their new birth,  
Healing, loving one another  
In community with earth.

Spirit dancing on the waters,  
We would come and dance with you  
'til our world is filled with music  
And in Christ all things are new.

**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**

**SEASON OF EMERGENCE**

- October 18: Person's Day ZOOM conversation group 10am
- October 19 Monthly Sacred Circle Dancing Pioneer Hall 6-8:30p.m.
- October 22 Topic: Upcoming Remit 3
- October 25 Leadership Mtg Pioneer Hall 11am-1pm
- October 29 Joint worship at Stewart Memorial, 10:30 a.m Finger food pot luck!!
- Nov 1 Cookie Fundraiser Fancy Baking Group (details to come)
- Nov 4 Dwight Lion's Remembrance Day Ceremony
- Nov 5 LOB Remembrance Day service
- Nov 15 ZOOM Coffee and Conversation
- Nov 16 Sacred Circle Dance 6-8:30p.m.
- Nov 18: Dwight Christmas Market Cookie Sale

**Stewardship is participation in God's Work**

**There are several different options for 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](mailto:lobunitedchurches@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.**

**Please give generously. Thank you!**