



LAKE OF BAYS PASTORAL CHARGE
Pioneer, Hillside – 10:30 a.m.

Sunday Worship on April 21 2024
Earth Sunday,
Fourth Sunday of Easter

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

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WE GATHER

Welcome

Family Life and Work

For your CALENDAR

April 21—April 28 Earth Week

April 25 Circle Dance in Pioneer Hall 6:30-800p.m.

April 28 Easter 5 10:30 a.m. Worship Team Meeting

May 5 Last shared service at Pioneer.

Hike for Hospice and Red Dress day

May 8, 11, 15, 18 @ 2 p.m. May 9, 10, 16, 17 @ 7p.m.

OLD LOVE by Norm Foster

May 12 Mother's Day. LOB circuit is back!!

Knox United: 9 a.m.

Stewart Memorial: 10:15a.m.

Pioneer Memorial 11:30 am.

May 19 The Pentecost Spirit as fulfilment of Easter

May 26 Trinity Sunday—The Mystery we call God

June 2-June 30 Rev Meg's holiday— holy time for rest

Schedule of Guest ministers TBA
July 7th Summer Sermon Series: Earth Connections
August 12-19. **CAMP AWESOME WEEK: Bees for Peace Spread the word!!!**

Lighting of the Christ Candle
Acknowledgement of the Land

Call to Worship:

One: Welcome to this holy time which we create together.

All: We gather as a community with God and each other remembering that we are of the earth--one with all life .

One: Let us breathe deeply as we centre our minds and bodies to worship God.

Opening 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.

Prayer of Approach (unison)

**Come Holy Spirit,
Enliven us this day.
Come into each heart, each prayer,
each song, each life,
so that we may live and love
with purpose,
with courage,
and with enthusiasm,**

serving the world you love with all our hearts
in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen

WE LISTEN

Scripture Readings: Psalm 23 and Romans 8:18-23

Hymn: Called by Earth and Sky MV#135

R. **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 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 wakening root-ed and strong Creation's faithful song**
- 4. Precious the fire that lights the way, bright dawning day Fire of passion sorrows un-done Our faith and justice one**

Sermon: Earth Child (I will be preaching a shortened version on Sunday)

The Apostle Paul was all about discerning what aspects of his religion needed to be left behind and what he needed to carry forward. Saul was extremely upset about an upstart peasant rabbi like Jesus of Nazareth upsetting the theological apple cart with his new-fangled teaching. So, when the religious authorities needed a volunteer to round up the followers of this new spirituality and put an end to the fledgling movement, Saul volunteered.

But Saul was so shattered by his encounter with the risen Jesus that by the time a couple of disciples picked him up off the road to Damascus and dusted him off, he had undergone an identity shift. He needed a new name. He became, to use his own phrase, "a new creation" in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Saul became Paul.

Paul did an interesting thing with all the teachings and stories of Jesus that he received from the other apostles. He never, ever talked about them in his letters. It's not that he didn't know the parables of Jesus. It's that somebody else was doing Jesus's teachings. It was in hand. But he had a distinct contribution to make. He took the teachings of Jesus and transformed them into teachings *about* Jesus. Just as Paul's name evolved, Paul's calling was to take this Christian movement to a new level. This is what he's getting at when he writes: "From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. (2 Corinthians 5:16) Paul started thinking about Jesus as the embodiment of sacred Wisdom—the same Wisdom (the Sophia of Proverbs 8) out of which a universe was born. He started imagining that God was reconciling all of creation to Godself in and through Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. Paul began to think that a new age had been ushered in. A "new creation" had begun and continues to be revealed.

Very early in his life as a follower of Christ, Paul was a Spirit-led active agent in the evolution of the Jesus tradition—something the church is called to re-enact in every generation. In doing so, Paul was enacting the same impulse that was in Jesus, who began many of his teachings with the phrase, "You have heard it said, but I say unto you. . ." This is the core of what it means to be church. We receive with gratitude the

tradition of our ancestors, and we allow the tradition to evolve through us. This is what it means to be “in Christ.”

The apostles in Jerusalem really didn't know what to do with Paul. He was pushing them to the edge of their identity as Jews. He was crossing boundaries, perhaps even transgressing boundaries: the Gentiles were welcome; they didn't have to eat kosher food or get circumcised; they didn't have to observe Jewish rituals. For Paul, God had done and continues to do something radically new in Jesus of Nazareth.

Paul writes: “if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (5:17) Jesus tells a story about a seed, one of his favourite images. He says that the Kin(g)dom of God is like a seed that a farmer scatters. After a few nights of sleep, the farmer arises one morning, and, sure enough, the seed has sprouted. But the farmer doesn't have a clue how it happened. He just knows that it's going to put food on the table for his family. Now, if you are a subsistence farmer, you're likely to give this whole mystery only passing consideration. You've got work to do. You don't have a lot of time to ponder the mystery of growth. But if you are a follower of Jesus, he's going to plop you down in front of a wheat field and require that you consider it deeply. Because, if you get this piece, you get the Kin(g)dom of God, and if you get the Kin(g)dom of God from the inside out, you get what Jesus is about.

Jesus invites his followers to look at the mystery of growth. He wants them to suspend ordinary functional consciousness (“Seeds just grow and then we harvest the seeds and make bread and eat it, so that's a good thing”) and look at the process—the dynamics of growth. “Earth,” says Jesus, “produces of itself.” That's the key line in the whole parable. Earth is a living organism within a living universe that knows how to do life. Life emerges within creation. Scientists have names for it: self-organization, autopoiesis, and emergence. But these are just fancy words that describe the religious sensibility that anybody who has spent any time at all pondering the meaning of life feels—Mystery. And “mystery” is not the sum total of what we do not know but might know one day when science gets around to figuring it out. Mystery is about entering into the interior depths of Reality, there to be apprehended by the One, the Oneness, the Source of all this life, the Spirit from whom all creation emerges.

The religious life is about falling back in love with the Mystery of all it all, with the One in whom this life emerges. And what Paul began to discern was that the role of Jesus and the Risen Christ was to teach his disciples that this developmental growth happens *in them* as well. The same Spirit from which the seed grows into a fully mature plant is animating us, growing us, and awakening us to our full potential. In fact, if you spend much time pondering this you come to a mystical awareness that *we* are the seeds, and that the same mysterious power that we observe animating a plant also animates our growth. We're meant to come to full flower. Before the end of our life, all that we have done, all that we have been, all that we have contributed will be harvested to serve the ongoing emergence and revelation of the children of God.

We are Earth's children--the fruit of the Great Emergence. Give Earth 4.5 billion years, leave it to “produce of itself;” and the planet produces human beings, with bodies and minds, with flesh and spirit, with instincts and conscious awareness. We are, each of us, like Jesus, a medium of sacred, creative Mystery. An evolutionary, sacred intelligence that we call Spirit is coursing through you and through me. And when we open to this intelligence, it begins to dawn on us that we are not separate from the processes that created us. We *are* that process in human form. To know this is to access the creative power of a universe. To own it is to receive and reveal a new, expanded identity for the sake of the whole creation. This creative project of growing into fullness and freedom is the prime directive of the universe. It is the call of the Christ. It is what Paul is talking about in the passage from Romans which we read today. We are being born, we are becoming Alive in Christ. And the whole creation is groaning with birthpangs.

By declaring that we are Alive in Christ we are saying that we are the seeds of God; we are also the medium, the earth that produces of itself; that we are farmers who reap this harvest of creative potential, and, finally, when you get to the bottom of it all, we are embodied forms of a great mystery that is constantly on the move. All of this is what it means to be in Christ—the old has passed away and everything has become new!

What does this mean for us as a congregation? We'll create habitats for growth in our worship, our educational programs, our way of being together in the community, and in the way we govern ourselves. We

won't claim to know *how* the growth happens any more than a farmer knows how the seed grows. But we will recognize the growth as a sign of Spirit in our midst. We will continue to help people discover their gifts for ministry and then release them into their calling, and we will call the garden that emerges "church." It will be like an English garden, tended but glorious in its wildness. There will be those who love to deadhead and prune, and those who love to pick the flowers and make beautiful arrangements; there will be those who haul in the manure and those who are always dreaming up new garden beds. We will tap into an intuition that Paul wrote about in his letter to the Romans so long ago-- that incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth was the fulfillment as well as the ongoing emergence of human beings that bring blessing to planet Earth. May it be so! Amen.

WE RESPOND

Call for Offering

Offertory Hymn "We Give You But Your Own" VU# 542

**We give you but your own,
whate'er the gift may be;
all that we have is yours alone,
we give it gratefully.**

Prayer of Dedication

Prayers of the People:

**O God we call
O God we call
From deep inside we yearn
From deep inside we yearn
From deep inside we yearn for you.**

Litany of Intercession for the Impact of Fossil Fuels

**We pray for minds and hearts open to issues of climate justice,
God of all Creation...Receive our prayer.**

**We pray for safety, well-being, and new hope for the poor and vulnerable, those most adversely affected in health and employment by climate change and fossil fuel extraction,
God of all Creation...Receive our prayer.**

**We pray for those negatively impacted by fracking, by mountaintop removal coal mining, by natural gas pipelines, by off-shore oil drilling,
God of all Creation...Receive our prayer.**

**We pray for the Earth damaged, for creatures endangered, for vegetation altered by the effects of massive consumption of fossil fuels,
God of all Creation...Receive our prayer.**

We pray for children now living and those yet to be born to a heritage of spill, slurry, and sludge, of cancer and hunger, of fossil fuel–driven disparity in economic status and the loss of beauty,
God of all Creation...Receive our prayer.
We pray for minds and hearts to open here and everywhere to issues of climate justice,
God of all Creation...Receive our prayer.

Paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer VU p. 916

Closing Hymn: In the Bulb there is a flower VU#703

- 1 In the bulb there is a flower;
in the seed, an apple tree;
in cocoons, a hidden promise:
butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter
there's a spring that waits to be,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.**

- 2 There's a song in every silence,
seeking word and melody;
there's a dawn in every darkness,
bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future;
what it holds, a mystery,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.**

- 3 In our end is our beginning;
in our time, infinity;
in our doubt there is believing;
in our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection;
at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.**

Commissioning and Benediction:

Go in Peace and as you go,
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

**Ongoing Stewardship Options:
1.In person and on the plate.**

- 2. Via PAR (preauthorized remittance). Money is withdrawn monthly from your bank account.**
- 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, specifying for which church the donation is intended. Thank you.**

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