



### **Chartres Cathedral Labyrinth**

LAKE OF BAYS PASTORAL CHARGE

Pioneer, Hillside – 9:00 a.m.

Stewart Memorial, Dwight – 10:15 a.m.

Knox, Dorset – 11:30 a.m.

### **Sunday Worship, July 23, 2023**

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**

As we begin our worship we acknowledge the ancient indigenous history and heritage of the land upon which we live and work. We acknowledge the many original indigenous people of this land with all their different languages and cultures, we acknowledge the First Nations, the Metis people and the Inuit people. We give thanks for their care for the land and the waters. We are grateful for their teachings about living with respect in creation. We are deeply sorry for past injustices and humbly seek right relations with all with whom we share this land.

**Call to Worship:**

In the Spirit of Jesus Christ,  
who calls us to be the church

**we celebrate God's presence,**

In the Spirit of Jesus Christ

Who calls us to seek justice and resist evil

**We live with respect in creation**

In the Spirit of Jesus Christ

Who calls us to love and serve others,

**We come to worship God.**

**Opening Hymn:** Will You Come and Follow Me VU #567

1 Will you come and follow me  
if I but call your name?

Will you go where you don't know  
and never be the same?

Will you let my love be shown,  
will you let my name be known,  
will you let my life be grown  
in you and you in me?

2 Will you leave yourself behind  
if I but call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind  
and never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare  
should your life attract or scare?  
Will you let me answer prayer  
in you and you in me?

3 Will you let the blinded see  
if I but call your name?  
Will you set the prisoners free  
and never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean,

and do such as this unseen,  
and admit to what I mean  
in you and you in me?

- 4 Will you love the 'you' you hide  
if I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside  
and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found  
to reshape the world around,  
through my sight and touch and sound  
in you and you in me?
- 5 Christ, your summons echoes true  
when you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you  
and never be the same.  
In your company I'll go  
where your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I'll move and live and grow  
in you and you in me.

**Opening Prayer (unison)**  
**Gracious and loving God,**  
**we gather this morning,**  
**opening to your healing power.**  
**We trust that the presence of Christ**  
**is a hidden wholeness coursing**  
**through our lives and our world.**  
**We come seeking to open ourselves**  
**to the sacred flow of this healing power.**  
**Amen**

**Prayer for Forgiveness VU#302**

## WE LISTEN

Scripture reading: Romans 8: 14-25.

Leader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church

Response: Thanks be to God.

Gradual Hymn: In the Quiet Curve of Evening VU#278

- 1 In the quiet curve of evening,  
in the sinking of the days,  
in the silky void of darkness, you are there.  
In the lapses of my breathing,  
in the space between my ways,  
in the crater carved by sadness, you are there.  
You are there, you are there, you are there.
  
- 2 In the rests between the phrases,  
in the cracks between the stars,  
in the gaps between the meaning, you are there.  
In the melting down of endings,  
in the cooling of the sun,  
in the solstice of the winter, you are there.  
You are there, you are there, you are there.
  
- 3 In the mystery of my hungers,  
in the silence of my rooms,  
in the cloud of my unknowing, you are there.  
In the empty cave of grieving,  
in the desert of my dreams,  
in the tunnel of my sorrow, you are there.  
You are there, you are there, you are there.

**Sermon: Birth Pangs: A Path towards Wholeness**

No one ever said it was going to be easy to follow Jesus and become a proclaimer and a practitioner of the Realm of God--God's Malkutah.

Malkutah is the Aramaic word that Jesus used to speak about the realm of God within which he acted and which he proclaimed—a realm of abundance and peace and justice where all belong. It is the word I prefer to use because it has layers of meaning that have no relation to the concepts of hierarchy and power over others that are implied by the more conventional phrase “kingdom of God.”

To follow Jesus is to be at home and empowered within the presence of God and Malkutah wherever we might find ourselves—a realm where we can become fully human like him—fully connected with the original soil and unconditional love that is our beginning and our birthright..

When we step onto this path of unconditional love and life in God with Jesus we are promised rich abundance of life but it is not something of which we can be in control nor is it without pain. It is a path we can trust and it is a path on which we will never be alone, but it may lead through what seems like absolute chaos. It is a path we can trust but it may sometimes feel like it is leading us away from where we think we should be going. This is why walking a winding circular path called a labyrinth has become a spiritual practice that many people find helpful in these crazy out-of-control times that we are living in.

Labyrinths—an ancient pre-Christian symbol—are found all over the world. It was embraced and developed in medieval times as a way that people could make a symbolic spiritual pilgrimage to Jerusalem even though they couldn't afford to do it in reality. There is a famous labyrinth on the floor of Chartres Cathedral in France.

A labyrinth is not a maze where you encounter obstacles and dead ends and get lost. A labyrinth is a single path that winds back and forth and around. Sometimes it passes very close to the centre and at other times it takes you far away from the centre but if you trust it and keep on walking it will take you right into the centre and then, back out again.

In our text today the Apostle Paul talks about birth pangs—the difficult, painful labour of childbirth which is another image for a path that must be followed and trusted despite its difficulties. We are urged to persist, trusting the birthpangs along this path because we will emerge into the wholeness and the resurrection life of Malkutah—a realm of true community where all are welcome and all are at home.

Many of you will remember a moment In January of 2016 Valerie Kaur, a Sikh activist and lawyer, spoke at an interfaith “watchnight” service that was orga-

nized to respond to a series of hate crimes in the United States. Her core image speaks directly to our situation today. She said: “What if this darkness is not the darkness of the tomb, but the darkness of the womb? What if our America is not dead but a country that is waiting to be born? What if the story of America is one long labor? What if all of our grandfathers and grandmothers are standing behind us now, those who survived occupation and genocide, slavery and Jim Crow, detentions and political assault? What if they are whispering in our ears ‘You are brave!’ What if this is our nation’s greatest transition? What does the midwife tell us to do? Breathe. And then? Push. Because if we don’t push we will die. If we don’t push our nation will die. Tonight we will breathe. Tomorrow we will labor in love...”

And where in God in all of this? God is like a midwife at our side—God with Us—and, come what may, she’s not going anywhere; God the midwife is right here coaxing and soothing us, challenging us to stay on the path and push through the pain in order to receive the new life that is being born. God, the midwife, is holding us, the world, and all its people in her strong, capable hands, groaning with us as we hurt and grieve and fear, steadfastly urging us to choose life instead of death, gentleness instead of violence, justice instead of greed, hope instead of despair. God, the midwife, pushes us to change our lives in ways that will allow new life to be born in the world. God, the midwife speaks words of encouragement, reminding us of how strong we are, how beautiful, how beloved, how important.

Having faith in a loving, steadfast, ever-present, midwife God doesn’t mean that we will get the outcome we desire; it doesn’t mean we won’t fear or doubt or be anxious or suffer. But it does allow us to bring all of those things into the larger vision of God’s future. And when we do that, our suffering is given some meaning, our hopes are given content and shape, and we are reminded of who we are and what we can do: namely, we are children of God who are entrusted with giving birth to God’s love in our own lives, in our communities, in our world. No matter how long the birth pangs last. May God grant us grace to endure the pain so that we can experience the joy. Amen.

## **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:** This is God's Wondrous World VU#296

- 1 This is God's wondrous world,  
and to my listening ears  
    all nature sings, and round me rings  
the music of the spheres.  
This is God's wondrous world;  
I rest me in the thought  
    of rocks and trees, of skies and seas,  
God's hand the wonders wrought.
  
- 2 This is God's wondrous world:  
the birds their carols raise;  
    the morning light, the lily white,  
declare their Maker's praise.  
This is God's wondrous world:  
God shines in all that's fair;  
    in the rustling grass or mountain pass,  
God's voice speaks everywhere.
  
- 3 This is God's wondrous world:  
O let me ne'er forget  
    that though the wrong seems oft so strong,  
God is the ruler yet.  
This is God's wondrous world:  
why should my heart be sad?  
    Let voices sing, let the heavens ring:  
God reigns, let earth be glad!

## COMMISSIONING and BLESSING

May the Christ who walks on wounded feet  
Walk with you on the road  
May the Christ who serves with wounded hands  
Stretch out your hands to serve  
May the Christ who loves with a wounded heart  
Open your hearts to love  
May you see the face of Christ in everyone you meet  
And may everyone you meet  
See the face of Christ in you.

## WELCOME TO SUMMER CHURCH IN MUSKOKA

July 23: Celebrating Diversity: Muskoka Pride Week  
July 30 Joint Communion 10:30 a.m. at Seabreeze Church  
August 6  
Aug 10 Celebration of Life: Stephanie Rabjohn  
August 8-11 CAMP AWESOME: Bees for Peace

**PLEASE NOTE: the Return of CAMP AWESOME's new program celebrating God's wildly wonderful world (Psalm 104)**

**BEES FOR PEACE. August 8-11, 9 am to 12 pm**

**Kids and youth (Ages 5 - 12) are welcome to join our 4-day summer camp where we will be learning about native bees, honey bees and native plant gardens and how they relate to our faith! In this camp, we will have lots of fun games and activities to help enhance the learning experience. This 4-day camp will help build community among the youth of the church and strengthen their connection to the Bible and nature. By the end of the camp, kids and youth will get a wonderful experience and gain knowledge about the hidden community that we live with: pollinators.**

### 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](mailto: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.**