

**Welcome to  
The Port Dover – Woodhouse Pastoral Charge  
Woodhouse United Church and  
Grace United Church  
Worship From Home Service  
Sunday, June 20, 2021**



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**Office Hours 9:00 am – 11:30 am (Mon. – Thurs)**

**June 20 2021**

## **4th Sunday after Pentecost Indigenous Day of Prayer**

### **Welcome and Announcements**

The Time for the Young at Heart and the Message were written by Read Sherman, a minister at Trinity United Church in Montreal.

### **Christ Candle**

### **Thanksgiving Address**

**Kathryn:** Today we have gathered and we see that the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. We give greetings and thank each other as People.

**Jim S:** We are all thankful to our Mother, the Earth, for she gives us all that we need for life. She supports our feet as we walk about upon her. It gives us joy that she continues to care for us as she has from the beginnings of time.

**Marjorie:** We give thanks to all the Waters of the world for quenching our thirst and providing us with strength. Water is life. We know its power in many forms – waterfalls and rain, mists and streams, rivers and oceans.

**Jim D:** We turn our minds to all the Fish life in the water. They were instructed to cleanse and purify the water. They also give themselves to us as food. We are grateful that we can still find pure water.

**Joan:** We turn toward the vast fields of Plant life. As far as the eye can see, the Plants grow, working many wonders. They sustain many life forms. We give thanks and look forward to seeing Plant life for many generations to come.

**Steve:** We honor and thank all the Food Plants we harvest from the garden. Since the beginning of time, the grains, vegetables, beans and berries have helped people survive. May other living things draw strength from them too.

**Jim S.:** Now we turn to all the Medicine Herbs of the world. From the beginning, they were instructed to take away sickness. They are always waiting and ready to heal us. We are happy there are still among us those special few who remember how to use these plants for healing. We send greetings and thanks to the Medicines and to the keepers of the Medicines.

**Marjorie:** We gather our minds together to send greetings and thanks to all the Animal life in the world. They have many things to teach us as people. We see them near our homes and in the deep forests.

**Jim D:** We turn our thoughts to the Trees. The Earth has many families of Trees who have their own instructions and uses. Some provide us with shelter and shade, others with fruit, beauty and other useful things. Many peoples of the world use a Tree as a symbol of peace and strength. .

**Joan:** We put our minds together as one and thank all the Birds who move and fly about over our heads. The Creator gave them beautiful songs. Each day they remind us to enjoy and appreciate life. The Eagle was chosen to be their leader.

**Steve:** We are thankful to the powers we know as the Four Winds. We hear their voices in the moving air as they refresh us and purify the air we breathe. They help us bring the change of seasons. From the four directions they come, bringing us messages and giving us strength.

**Jim S:** Now we turn to the west where our Grandfathers, the Thunder Beings, live. With lightning and thundering voices, they bring with them the water that renews life.

**Marjorie:** We now send greetings and thanks to our eldest Brother, the Sun. Each day without fail he travels from the sky from east to west, bringing the light of the new day. He is the source of all the fires of life.

Grandmother Moon Reader: We put our minds together and give thanks to our oldest Grandmother, the Moon, who lights the nighttime sky. She is the leader of women all over the world, and she governs the movement of the ocean tides. By her changing face we measure time, and it is the Moon who watches over the arrival of children here on Earth.

**Jim D:** We give thanks to the Stars who are spread across the sky like jewelry. We see them in the night, helping the Moon to light the darkness and bringing dew to the gardens and growing things. When we travel at night, they guide us home.

**Joan:** We gather our minds to greet and thank the enlightened Teachers who have come to help throughout the ages. When we forget how to live in harmony, they remind us of the way we were instructed to live as people.

**Steve:** Now we turn our thoughts to the Creator, or Great Spirit, and send greetings and thanks for all the gifts of Creation. Everything we need to live a good life is here on this Mother Earth. Response: For all the love that is still around us, we gather our minds together as one and send our choicest words of greetings and thanks to the Creator. Now our minds are one.

**Kathryn:** We have now arrived at the place where we end our words. Of all the things we have named, it was not our intention to leave anything out. If something was forgotten, we leave it to each individual to send such greetings and thanks in their own way.

Silence

Response (**Jim S.**): And now our minds are one.

### **Hymn – MV #144 Like a Healing Stream SH Disc 3 #12**

Like a healing stream in a barren desert,  
Spirit water bringing life to dusty earth,  
God is trickling through our lives as in a dream unfolding,  
promising revival and rebirth...like a healing stream.

Like a gentle rain on a thirsty garden,  
Spirit water come to nourish tiny seed,  
God is bubbling through the soil to coax a new creation,  
yearning for an end to want and need... like a gentle rain.

Like a river strong with a restless current,  
Spirit water rushing on to distant shore,  
God is carving out a channel in a new direction,  
calling for an end to hate and war... like a river strong.

Like a mighty sea reaching far horizons,  
Spirit water with a love both deep and wide,  
God is working in our hearts to shape a new tomorrow:  
God will always challenge and provide! Like a mighty sea,  
like a river strong, like a gentle rain, like a healing stream.

### **Poem – Stacey Laforme – Mother Earth (Video)**

#### **Time for the Young at Heart**

Have you ever thought about what makes for a good neighbour?  
What are the qualities you'd want to have in a good neighbour? (*nice, friendly, helpful, trustworthy, keeps their yard up, shares...*) What would make a neighbour harder to live next to? (*mean, unfriendly, doesn't respect their property or yours, trespasses, untrustworthy*)

In the Bible Jesus talks about how important it is to have and be a good neighbour. One time when he was asked to sum up everything he knew about God—everything he believed God wanted us to be—he talked about loving your neighbour like you love yourself as the key.

**June 21 each year is National Indigenous Peoples Day.** It's a day set aside to

celebrate being neighbours with Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples have lived on this land for thousands, tens of thousands of years before European people ever came to be new neighbours. Indigenous peoples know a lot about being a good neighbour.



I want to show you something very special to the Haudenosaunee people. Their traditional territory covers much of what is now upper New York state, southern Ontario, and southwestern Quebec. When European peoples started showing up in the 1600s, the Haudenosaunee wanted to be good neighbours with the newcomers. So the Elders would sit with the newcomers and agree how to be good neighbours. The people then created what you see here—called a wampum belt—as a symbol of the agreement they had made. Another word for agreement we use is the word “treaty,” and this wampum belt has two rows rather than one.

Two peoples! And notice that the two lines are side by side, but they don’t cross or join together. This was because it made sense for the two peoples to live side by side but not interfere with each other. As we were saying earlier, a good neighbour is someone you care about and help, but you also want to allow them space and freedom to do their own thing just like you need space to do your own thing.

In the Haudenosaunee language, the term for this kind of getting along is ***kaswentha***. It means neighbours agree to travel their own self-determined path as equal parties and with mutual respect for the rights and needs of the other. Indigenous neighbours are still waiting for settlers to honour the agreements our ancestors made so long ago. That is a fact we peoples who came later really need to take to heart if we want to love our neighbours like Jesus did. Thanks for listening!

**Poem – Stacey Laforme – Walk With Me (Video)**

Video by youth in Pikangikum

## **Prayer for Illumination**

Our European ancestors brought Christianity to North America, yet often failed to live out Christ's teachings. We ask you, O God, to open our ears to hear, our eyes to see, our minds to understand, and our hearts to live the words you are speaking to us this day. Amen.

## **Scripture**

### **Intro to Genesis 1:26–27**

Creation stories are powerful shapers of reality because they help us imagine where we came from and why we are here. Indigenous peoples have such stories that give guidance and ground them in the earth that Creator has made. Eurocentric Christians tend to hold the words of Genesis 1 and 2 as creation stories, and the short passage we are about to hear has had a powerful, and many would increasingly say, negative effect on the Eurocentric way of relating to the earth. Let's listen now and wonder if there might be a better way.

### **Genesis 1:26-27**

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." <sup>27</sup> So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

### **Intro to Matthew 22:34–40**

When looking for a compass to guide you in life and faith, you can't do better than the teaching we are about to hear. Matthew's gospel is filled with stories and parables of Jesus, all meant to help us discover in him the Christ, but we know not everyone in the story will agree. In one such encounter, Jesus is tested by an adversary. Who is this man, and what does he really know? How aligned is he with the faith taught in the temple, the faith, you might say, of the status quo? To find out, let's listen.

### **Matthew 22:34-40**

<sup>34</sup> Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. <sup>35</sup> One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: <sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'" <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

## Message

It's Indigenous Day of Prayer in the United Church, and so let's celebrate? Today is a day we set apart in our church's calendar of celebrations to honour neighbours, relatives, kin that most of us don't get to see very often. Or maybe that's not quite right, for it's possible that some of us have connections with Indigenous communities either as family or friends or—wait for it—as neighbours. It's possible that in our neighbourhood, town, or city there are many Indigenous people we haven't yet had the chance to meet. For so long, many of our congregations have been oriented around other communities—especially the dominant, often White, Eurocentric communities who came to these shores as Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists. For so long, many of us have only gotten to know Indigenous peoples we've met on television news or in the movies, leaving our heads swimming in often narrow and negative stereotypes of who “they” are rather than the truth: quite simply, Indigenous peoples, like all people, our neighbours.

What else can we conclude after hearing from Matthew's gospel? Jesus is so clear to the lawyer who asks him the question about what following God and true religion is all about. It's about love, he says. Love for God, love for self, and love for neighbour as for self. Jesus's answer stops the lawyer in his tracks as it can stop us in ours. This is a core teaching of our faith that suggests that paying attention to neighbourliness—how we love our neighbours, maybe especially the ones we don't get to see very often—is essential to celebrating who Christ is and who we are as we follow Jesus day by day.

Jesus was not one to stop finding neighbours at the end of a block or within one religious, social, or ethnic community. We know from the gospels he was constantly on the move back and forth between different, often rival, groups. He seemed to have no fear of arguing with the elite lawyers, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, or even Romans who defined the power structure of his time and place. He likewise recognized, spoke, ate with, and healed people of Syrophenician background, Samaritan background, humble people, those with no claim to power, fortune, or fame. To Jesus, God opened up possibility for relationship, friendship, where others saw only reason to condemn. His capacity to see a friend in a stranger is humbling, isn't it? I often wonder how he managed it on a day-to-day, practical basis. Can you really go through life thinking the whole world is your neighbour?

It's a question that becomes especially captivating for a celebration of kinship like the one we gather for today. You see, for many Indigenous peoples, one could say that the whole world actually is their neighbour! The traditional teachings of many nations have long acknowledged the essential oneness—the essential neighbourliness—of all living and non-living things. Traditional knowledge, passed down from generation to generation, has opened up a spiritually rich horizon of neighbours that includes not only the clans and kin of

a particular tribe or nation but also kinship with the essential elements of life such as the air, the waters, and the land with its plants and animals.

Let's just sit with that for a moment. For many Indigenous people, what we would call the gifts of creation—the plants and animals, the birds of the air, the fish in the sea, the land warmed by the sun by day and lit by the moon at night—these gifts are as much neighbours as we are to each other. This is wisdom that comes from Indigenous peoples' experience of living in this land for generations. Rather than hold a dominion model over creation, such as the one we inherit from our ancient Judeo-Christian myth in Genesis 1, many Indigenous peoples celebrate stories of how creation taught them how to be human, how to live respectfully and with honour among all Creator's other beautiful creatures. It's a whole different mindset. It's a whole different orientation to what and who are kin. And very sadly, it's a beautiful part of the gifts Indigenous people offered to share, but were rejected, when our settler ancestors came to these shores.

The consequences for holding such differing understandings about being neighbours has been devastating. Devastating to the generations whose ancestors signed treaties with the Crown expecting to share in the abundance of these lands with the newcomers—not be dispossessed of it. Devastating to the generations who increasingly found themselves outnumbered by the newcomers pouring into their traditional territories, newcomers who had no conception of how the land was to be treated, no conception of how to live interdependently with the animals and plants, with the waters and the air. In other words, no conception of how to be a good neighbour.

Instead of recognizing the offer to share the land, the settling peoples saw the land as ripe for the taking. Treaties were broken, reserves were created, and residential schools were built. A whole government apparatus was put together to control Indigenous peoples and their land, attempting to reduce sovereign nations to wards of the state.

Attempting, and still at it we know. We who benefit from this system—people who see the land not as living and sacred but as patches of ground to fence and resources to exploit—we are caught up in the sins of our ancestors. So many of us don't see the lie upon which so much of Canada and our wealth is built. And this continued unwillingness to recognize our failure to be good neighbours to the peoples into whose lands we moved is a cause of grief not only for Indigenous peoples but also to those other neighbours—the land, waters, air, trees, plants, birds, animals, and fish upon which we all depend. Despite all the harm colonization has brought to neighbours Jesus would have us love, we celebrate that Indigenous peoples are our neighbours.

If Jesus were here, can you imagine what he might suggest we do? He once told a lawyer sent to trick him his summary of faith: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments



hang all the law and the prophets.” By reaching out to meet Indigenous neighbours, we can signal we’re catching on at last. Jesus had no reason to fear anyone he met because he knew each person already to be kin to him as gifts of God. To follow his lead, neither should we. Amen.

### **Hymn - VU #701 What Does the Lord Require of You SH Disc 5 #14**

What does the Lord require of you?

What does the Lord require of you?

Justice, kindness,  
walk humbly with your God.

To seek justice, and love kindness,  
and walk humbly with your God.

### **Offering and Prayer of Dedication**

Lord, we thank you for your many gifts. We thank you for our many neighbours. We thank you that we are able to share our gifts with our neighbours. We ask you to bless these gifts and the role they will play in creating a more just world now and for the generations who will follow us. Amen.

### **Minute for Mission Whole Life Ministry - Wampum : (video)**

### **Prayers of the People**

O God, we come together as a human family, blessed to be alive, blessed to be on this land, blessed to have neighbours as diverse as your creation. You surround us with air we breathe, water we drink, all manner of living plants and animals that delight us and sustain us. Thank you, Creator, for all you provide. We take a moment in silence to ponder the blessings you give us—of family, friends, places to call home, the food we eat, the web of life in which we with all creatures live, move, and have our being. Hear us as we give thanks...

O God, we thank you for Indigenous neighbours and friends this day. And yet we lament, too. We lament that historic and contemporary racism continues to mar our relations. We lament the church’s role as beneficiaries of an economic and governance system that privileges settler peoples at the expense of the First Peoples of this land. We lament apathy in the face of the need for change, change that recognizes the sovereignty of the First Peoples and recognizes at long last, in ways that make a difference, the sacredness of the land and the need for all of us to walk humbly upon it.

O God, for the witness of strength, caring, and love of Indigenous peoples, and for the struggle for what is just and right, open our hearts this day. Encourage us to listen more, speak less, participate in the movements for change that will

bring us together in good and respectful ways. Encourage us to make friends, get to know someone's story, and share our stories too, without fear, for in Christ we know we are all kin, relatives, with you and with each other and with all living and non-living things.

Hear us now as we pray for those hurting and in pain in all our communities:

**Jim S.** - For anyone worn down by systemic racism, including by government and by the church, that White people and those with power will change their thinking and how they live so justice will finally come.

**Marjorie** - For anyone suffering the injustice of racial profiling, ending up involved with the law and incarcerated in prisons at a higher rate than other populations, that policing will change so justice will finally come.

**Jim D** - For survivors of residential schools, and their families that continue to live with that legacy, that justice will finally come.

**Joan** - For people living on reserves with shortages of funds for decent housing, water, water treatment, schools, and other community infrastructure, that justice will finally come.

**Steve** - For Indigenous neighbours living in urban areas, facing the challenges of prejudice and discrimination, for those living with PTSD and addiction, that justice will finally come.

**Jim S.** - For Indigenous women and girls, facing the two evils of racism and sexism, that their lives and bodies will be respected as sacred, that justice might finally come.

**Marjorie** - For those Indigenous women and girls who are among the thousands of murdered and missing, for them and their families, our lament at the shame of what has happened and our pledge to advocate for their safety, that justice will finally come.

**Jim D** - For the air, that all might breathe it clean and free, that justice might finally come.

**Joan** - For the waters—marshlands, lakes, rivers, streams. For the great seas and oceans. That they might be protected for the benefit of seven generations hence, that justice will finally come.

**Steve** - For the lands, forests, grass, and farmlands. For the prairies, foothills, and mountains. For their beauty, for the life that teems within, upon, and over them, for the reprioritization of the health of ecosystems over profit, so justice will finally come.

**Jim S.** - For the animals, birds, fish, and life of all kinds whose viability is being threatened by unsustainable human activity, that their lives will begin to count so that justice will finally come.

All this, as well as the prayers of our hearts, O God, we lift up to you. Hear our celebrations as we claim anew our kinship with you and with all our relations. Hear our laments, and grow our hearts full of compassion for self and other as we leave this place to be a better friend and neighbour to all. We pray in the name of Creator, who is Mother and Father of us all. We pray as well in the Spirit of Christ, whose words continue to guide our lives today as we say:

### **Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil:  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory  
forever and ever. Amen.

### **Hymn VU #691 Though Ancient Walls SH Disc 5 #5**

Though ancient walls may still stand proud  
and racial strife be fact,  
though boundaries may be lines of hate,  
proclaim God's saving act!

**Walls that divide are broken down;  
Christ is our unity!  
Chains that enslave are thrown aside;  
Christ is our liberty!**

When vested power stands firm entrenched  
and breaks another's back,  
when waste and want live side by side,  
it's Gospel that we lack.

**Walls that divide are broken down;  
Christ is our unity!  
Chains that enslave are thrown aside;  
Christ is our liberty!**

The truth we seek in varied scheme,  
the life that we pursue,  
unites us in a common quest

for self and world made new.

**Walls that divide are broken down;  
Christ is our unity!  
Chains that enslave are thrown aside;  
Christ is our liberty!**

The church divided seeks that grace,  
that newness we proclaim;  
a unity of serving love  
that lives praise to God's name!

**Walls that divide are broken down;  
Christ is our unity!  
Chains that enslave are thrown aside;  
Christ is our liberty!**

This broken world seeks lasting health  
and vital unity.  
God's people by God's Word renewed,  
cast off all slavery!

**Walls that divide are broken down;  
Christ is our unity!  
Chains that enslave are thrown aside;  
Christ is our liberty!**

**Benediction and Commissioning – Stacey Laforme - Prayer (video)**

**Commissioning Hymn MV #145 Draw the Circle Wide SH Disc 1 #20**

**Draw the circle wide, Draw it wider still. Let this be our song,  
no one stands alone, standing side by side, draw the circle wide.**

God the still-point of the circle, 'round whom all creation turns;  
nothing lost, but held forever, in God's gracious arms.

**Draw the circle wide, Draw it wider still. Let this be our song,  
no one stands alone, standing side by side, draw the circle wide.**

Let our hearts touch far horizons, so encompass great and small;  
let our loving know no borders, faithful to God's call.

**Draw the circle wide, Draw it wider still. Let this be our song,  
no one stands alone, standing side by side, draw the circle wide.**

Let the dreams we dream be larger, than we've ever dreamed before;  
let the dream of Christ be in us, open every door.

**Draw the circle wide, Draw it wider still. Let this be our song,  
no one stands alone, standing side by side, draw the circle wide.**