

A Song of Faith Service Sunday, February 12, 2023

Organ Prelude: *How can I
keep from singing?* Tune:

Robert Lowry, arr. Mark
Hayes

O God beyond all praising

Tune: Gustav Holst, arr.
Mark Hayes

Welcome: Karen Lumley

Acknowledgement of Land:

As we join in worship today,
we are Treaty One people
who gather on the traditional
and ancestral land of many
Nations who were signatories
to Treaty One – Brokenhead
Ojibway; Long Pine; Pequis;
Sagkeeng; Roseau River
Anishinaabe; Sandy Bay
Ojibway; and Swan Lake.
The area within Treaty One
also includes the homeland of
the Metis Nation, and several
Dakota First Nation
communities who have never
signed treaties with the
Crown.

Treaty One is a living
document, meant to be
honoured for as long as the
sun shines, the rivers flow

and the grass grows. The
history of colonization has
contradicted this vision,
causing deep and lasting
multi-generational harm.

As a Church we are called to
seek justice, to resist evil and
to live with respect in
Creation. This means being
honest about naming the
wrongs of the past and
present. It means being
diligent about seeking
reconciliation and reparation.
And it means walking
together in good ways; to live
with respect in this Creation
to which we belong.

As we hold this vision and
these intentions before us, we
light the candle, symbolizing
the sacred light which is
within and among all of us
who share this Earth home.

**Hymn: VU 374 Come and
Find the Quiet Centre
(verse 1)**

Background

This statement of faith seeks
to provide a verbal picture of
what The United Church of

Canada understands its faith to be in its current historical, political, social, and theological context at the beginning of the 21st century. It is also a means of ongoing reflection and an invitation for the church to live out its convictions in relation to the world in which we live.

The church's faith is grounded in truths that are timeless. These truths, however, must be embraced anew by Christians of each generation and stated "in terms of the thoughts of their own age and with the emphasis their age needs" (Statement of Faith, 1940).

Khal Shariff:

This is not the first time the United Church has formally expressed its collective faith. In the Basis of Union (1925), in the Statement of Faith (1940), and in A New Creed (1968), the United Church stated its faith in words appropriate to its time. This current statement of faith is offered within that tradition,

and in response to the request of the 37th General Council (2000) for a "timely and contextual statement of faith" that especially engages "the church in conversation on the nature of the church (ecclesiology), ministry and the sacraments."

This statement of faith attempts to reflect the spirit of The United Church of Canada and to respond to various defining elements in our social, political, and historical context, including the place of the church in society, the cultural and intellectual setting in which we find ourselves, the meaning of "truth," the impact of the market economy on our daily lives, and the growing issue of the meaning of "security." These contextual elements are further explored in the appendices to this document.

This is not a statement for all time but for *our* time. In as much as the Spirit keeps faith with us, we can express our

understanding of the Holy with confidence. And in as much as the Spirit is vast and wild, we recognize that our understanding of the Holy is always partial and limited. Nonetheless we have faith, and this statement collects the meaning of our song.

Call to Worship:

Leigh Harris-Carlson

God is Holy Mystery,
beyond complete knowledge,
above perfect description.

Yet, in love,
the one eternal God seeks
relationship.

So God creates the universe
and with it the possibility of
being and relating.

God tends the universe,
mending the broken and
reconciling the estranged.

God enlivens the universe,
guiding all things toward
harmony with their Source.

Grateful for God's loving
action, We cannot keep from
singing.

God, the Creator

With the Church through the
ages,

we speak of God as one and
triune:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We also speak of God as
Creator, Redeemer, and
Sustainer God, Christ, and
Spirit Mother, Friend, and
Comforter Source of Life,
Living Word, & Bond of
Love, and in other ways that
speak faithfully of the One on
whom our hearts rely,
the fully shared life at the
heart of the universe.

We witness to Holy Mystery
that is Wholly Love.

God is creative and self-
giving, generously moving
in all the near and distant
corners of the universe.
Nothing exists that does not
find its source in God.
Our first response to God's
providence is gratitude.
We sing thanksgiving.

**Hymn: VU 242 Let All
Things Now Living
(Verse 1)**

Khal:

Finding ourselves in a world
of beauty and mystery,
of living things, diverse and
interdependent, of complex
patterns of growth and
evolution, of subatomic
particles and cosmic swirls,
we sing of God the Creator,
the Maker and Source of all
that is.

Each part of creation reveals
unique aspects of God the
Creator,
who is both in creation and
beyond it.
All parts of creation, animate
and inanimate, are related.
All creation is good.
We sing of the Creator,
who made humans to live and
move and have their being in
God. In and with God,
we can direct our lives
toward right relationship
with each other and with
God. We can discover our
place as one strand in the web
of life.
We can grow in wisdom and
compassion.
We can recognize all people
as kin.
We can accept our mortality
and finitude, not as a curse,

but as a challenge to make
our lives and choices matter.

Hymn: MV 145 Draw the Circle Wide

Litany of Confession:

Karen:

Made in the image of God,
we yearn for the fulfillment
that is life in God.

Yet we choose to turn away
from God.

We surrender ourselves to
sin, a disposition revealed in
selfishness, cowardice, or
apathy.

Becoming bound and
complacent in a web of false
desires and wrong choices,
we bring harm to ourselves
and others.

This brokenness in human
life and community is an
outcome of sin.

Sin is not only personal
but accumulates to become
habitual and systemic forms
of injustice, violence, and
hatred.

We are all touched by this
brokenness:
the rise of selfish
individualism
that erodes human solidarity;

the concentration of wealth and power without regard for the needs of all; the toxins of religious and ethnic bigotry; the degradation of the blessedness of human bodies and human passions through sexual exploitation; the delusion of unchecked progress and limitless growth that threatens our home, the earth; the covert despair that lulls many into numb complicity with empires and systems of domination. We sing lament and repentance.

Choir: MV 78 God Weeps – Verse 1 & 2)

Words of Assurance: Leigh

Yet evil does not—cannot—undermine or overcome the love of God. God forgives, and calls all of us to confess our fears & failings with honesty and humility. God reconciles, and calls us to repent the part we have played in damaging our world, ourselves, & each other. God transforms, and calls us to protect the vulnerable, to pray for deliverance from evil,

to work with God for the healing of the world, that all might have abundant life. We sing of grace.

Hymn: MV 95 How Deep the Peace

God, the Holy Spirit: Khal

The fullness of life includes moments of unexpected inspiration and courage lived out, experiences of beauty, truth, and goodness, blessings of seeds and harvest, friendship and family, intellect and sexuality, the reconciliation of persons through justice and communities living in righteousness, and the articulation of meaning. And so we sing of God the Spirit, who from the beginning has swept over the face of creation, animating all energy and matter and moving in the human heart.

We sing of God the Spirit, faithful and untameable, who is creatively and redemptively active in the world.

The Spirit challenges us to celebrate the holy not only in what is familiar, but also in that which seems foreign.

We sing of the Spirit, who speaks our prayers of deepest longing and enfolds our concerns and confessions, transforming us and the world.

We offer worship as an outpouring of gratitude and awe and a practice of opening ourselves to God's still, small voice of comfort, to God's rushing whirlwind of challenge. Through word, music, art, and sacrament, in community and in solitude, God changes our lives, our relationships, and our world. We sing with trust.

Hymn: VU 381 Spirit of Life

Introduction to Spiritual Reading: Khal

Scripture is our song for the journey, the living word passed on from generation to generation to guide and inspire, that we might wrestle a holy revelation for our time

and place from the human experiences and cultural assumptions of another era. God calls us to be doers of the word and not hearers only.

The Spirit breathes revelatory power into scripture, bestowing upon it a unique and normative place in the life of the community.

The Spirit judges us critically when we abuse scripture by interpreting it narrowly, using it as a tool of oppression, exclusion, or hatred.

Psalm 40:1-6

I waited and waited and waited for GOD. At last God looked; finally God listened. God lifted me out of the ditch, pulled me from deep mud.

God stood me up on a solid rock to make sure I wouldn't slip.

God taught me how to sing the latest God-song, a praise-song to our God.

More and more people are seeing this: they enter the mystery, abandoning themselves to GOD.

Blessed are you who give
yourselves over to GOD, turn
your backs on the world's
"sure thing,"
ignore what the world
worships;

The world's a huge stockpile
of GOD-wonders and God-
thoughts.
Nothing and no one compares
to you!

I start talking about you,
telling what I know, and
quickly run out of words.
Neither numbers nor words
account for you.

⁶ Doing something for you,
bringing something to you
that's not what you're after.
Being religious, acting
pious—that's not what you're
asking for.

You've opened my ears
so I can listen.

God, Incarnate: Leigh

The wholeness of scripture
testifies to the oneness and
faithfulness of God.

The multiplicity of scripture
testifies to its depth: two
testaments, four gospels,
contrasting points of view
held in tension— all a faithful
witness to the One and Triune

God, the Holy Mystery that
is Wholly Love.

We find God made known in
Jesus of Nazareth,
and so we sing of God the
Christ, the Holy One
embodied.

We sing of Jesus, a Jew,
born to a woman in poverty
in a time of social upheaval
and political oppression.
He knew human joy and
sorrow. So filled with the
Holy Spirit was he
that in him people
experienced the presence of
God among them.
We sing praise to God
incarnate.

Jesus announced the coming
of God's reign—a
commonwealth not of
domination but of peace,
justice, and reconciliation.
He healed the sick and fed
the hungry. He forgave sins
and freed those held captive
by all manner of demonic
powers. He crossed barriers
of race, class, culture, gender.
He preached and practised
unconditional love— love of

God, love of neighbour, love of friend, love of enemy— and he commanded his followers to love one another. as he had loved them.

Karen:

Because his witness to love was threatening, those exercising power sought to silence Jesus. He suffered abandonment and betrayal, state-sanctioned torture and execution. He was crucified.

But death was not the last word. God raised Jesus from death, turning sorrow into joy, despair into hope. We sing of Jesus raised from the dead. We sing hallelujah.

Hymn: Vu 155 Jesus Christ Is Risen (vs. 1 & 4)

Khal:

By becoming flesh in Jesus, God makes all things new. In Jesus' life, teaching, and self-offering, God empowers us to live in love. In Jesus' crucifixion, God bears the sin, grief, and suffering of the world. In Jesus' resurrection, God overcomes death.

Nothing separates us from the love of God.

The Risen Christ lives today, present to us and the source of our hope. In response to who Jesus was and to all he did and taught, to his life, death, and resurrection, and to his continuing presence with us through the Spirit, we celebrate him as the Word made flesh, the one in whom God and humanity are perfectly joined, the transformation of our lives, the Christ.

The Church: Khal

We sing of a church seeking to continue the story of Jesus by embodying Christ's presence in the world. We are called together by Christ as a community of broken but hopeful believers, loving what he loved, living what he taught, striving to be faithful servants of God in our time and place. Our ancestors in faith bequeath to us experiences of their faithful living; upon their lives, our lives are built.

Our living of the gospel makes us a part of this communion of saints, experiencing the fulfillment of God's reign even as we actively anticipate a new heaven and a new earth.

The church has not always lived up to its vision. It requires the Spirit to reorient it, helping it to live an emerging faith while honouring tradition, challenging it to live by grace rather than entitlement, for we are called to be a blessing to the earth.

Hymn: VU 579 The Church is Wherever

Offering – Karen: We invite you at this time to share God's abundance – in person, online or through PAR, or in any way that you feel called to do so. Our gifts will be used to serve the needs of those close to us and those across the world through Mission & Service. We offer ourselves, our gifts, our love, in hope for the future.

Let us pray:

Holy One, giver of all good, source of all hope receives us, all that we have and all that we are. Challenge us, share us, bless us, so we might be a blessing and a gift for the earth. All that we have, all that we are, these we offer, in Jesus name, AMEN.

MV 191 What Can I do?

Words of Dedication: Leigh

We sing of God's good news lived out, a church with purpose: faith nurtured and hearts comforted, gifts shared for the good of all, resistance to the forces that exploit and marginalize, fierce love in the face of violence, human dignity defended, members of a community held and inspired by God, corrected and comforted, instrument of the loving Spirit of Christ, creation's mending. We sing of God's mission.

Introduction to Prayers of the People

Khal:

We are each given particular gifts of the Spirit. For the sake of the world,

God calls all followers of Jesus to Christian ministry. In the church, some are called to specific ministries of leadership, both lay and ordered; some witness to the good news; some uphold the art of worship; some comfort the grieving and guide the wandering; some build up the community of wisdom; some stand with the oppressed and work for justice. To embody God's love in the world, the work of the church requires the ministry and discipleship of all believers.

Prayers of the People:

Let us Pray: Karen

As we come before you with what is in our hearts, there is no question but that we'd like to feel good. We're worried and anxious, not pleased with our behaviour or our fate.

We continue to pray for the victims of death and destruction in Ukraine, and for the consequences for the world. We ask blessing on Ukrainian refugees who seek

a safe haven in the midst of distress that they might find warm welcome and relief.
(Silence)

We pray for all touched by Covid, that recovery will be complete and side effects few. **(Silence)**

We pray for ourselves O God, and those that we name in the silence of our hearts, that we might find rest in the midst of our turmoil, courage to embrace the future, and strength to lead our communities into this new world coming to be.
(Silence)

We pray for victims of gun violence throughout the world **(Silence)**

These and all our prayers we offer in the name of Jesus who taught his disciples to pray

The Lord's Prayer – unison
Our Mother and 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, for ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: VU 460 All Who Hunger (v 1 & 3)

Reading: Leigh

In grateful response to God's abundant love, we bear in mind our integral connection to the earth and one another; we participate in God's work of healing and mending creation.

To point to the presence of the holy in the world, the church receives, consecrates, and shares visible signs of the grace of God. In company with the churches of the Reformed and Methodist traditions, we celebrate two sacraments as gifts of Christ: baptism and holy communion. In these sacraments the ordinary

things of life—water, bread, wine—point beyond themselves to God and God's love, teaching us to be alert to the sacred in the midst of life.

Before conscious thought or action on our part, we are born into the brokenness of this world. Before conscious thought or action on our part, we are surrounded by God's redeeming love. Baptism by water in the name of the Holy Trinity is the means by which we are received, at any age, into the covenanted community of the church.

It is the ritual that signifies our rebirth in faith and cleansing by the power of God. Baptism signifies the nurturing, sustaining, and transforming power of God's love and our grateful response to that grace.

Khal:

Carrying a vision of creation healed and restored, we welcome all in the name of Christ. Invited to the table where none shall go hungry, We gather as Christ's guests and friends. In holy

communion we are
commissioned to feed as we
have been fed, forgive as we
have been forgiven, love as
we have been loved. The
open table speaks of the
shining promise of barriers
broken and creation healed.
In the communion meal, wine
poured out

and bread broken, we
remember Jesus. We
remember not only the
promise but also the price
that he paid for who he was,
for what he did and said,
and for the world's
brokenness.

We taste the mystery of
God's great love for us,
and are renewed in faith and
hope.

We place our hope in God.
We sing of a life beyond life
and a future good beyond
imagining: a new heaven and
a new earth, the end of
sorrow, pain, and tears,
Christ's return and life with
God, the making new of all
things. We yearn for the
coming of that future, even
while participating in eternal
life now.

Hymn: VU 713 I See a New Heaven (Verses 1 & 4)

Commissioning: Karen
Divine creation does not
cease until all things have
found wholeness, union, and
integration with the common
ground of all being. As
children of the Timeless One,
our time-bound lives will find
completion in the all-
embracing Creator. In the
meantime, we embrace the
present, embodying hope,
loving our enemies, caring
for the earth, choosing life.

Benediction - unison
**Grateful for God's loving
action, we cannot keep
from singing. Creating and
seeking relationship, in awe
and trust, we witness to
Holy Mystery who is
Wholly Love.**

**Final Hymn: VU 716 My
Life Flows On (Verse 1)
Amen.**

**Postlude: *Rejoice, o pilgrim
throng* (Tune - Marion) arr.
Michael Burkhardt**



**Scan this QR code to view
the *Song of Faith***

Thank you to our readers:
Khal Shariff
Leigh Harris-Carlson