

Home Worship for Mothers' Day/Christian Family Sunday **May 10, 2020**

Welcome and a reminder that we worship on Passamaquoddy territory

Call into Awareness of Divine Presence

We come here to be part of the family of God, Father and Mother and Sustainer of all.

We come together as friends and followers of God's beloved child Jesus.

The Holy Spirit breathes through us in our spoken and silent prayer.

Let us worship in spirit and in truth.

We Sing

VU 232

Joyful, Joyful [van Dyke/Beethoven] Mount Zion United Church

<https://youtu.be/HC--wPjkzVI>

Joyful, joyful, we adore you,
God of glory, life and love;
hearts unfold like flowers before you,
opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,
drive our fear and doubt away;
giver of immortal gladness,
fill us with the light of day.

All your works with joy surround you,
earth and heaven reflect your rays,
stars and angels sing around you,
center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
flowery meadow, flashing sea,
chanting bird and flowing fountain,
sound their praise eternally.

You are giving and forgiving,
ever blessing, ever blest,
wellspring of the joy of living,
ocean depth of happy rest!
Source of grace and fount of blessing,
let your light upon us shine;
teach us how to love each other,
lift us to the joy divine.

Mortals, join the mighty chorus
which the morning stars began;
God's own love is reigning o'er us,
joining people hand in hand.
Ever singing, march we onward,
victors in the midst of strife;
joyful music lifts us sunward
in the triumph song of life.

Opening Prayer

Source of love , we thank you for signs of spring and hope of summer. We give thanks for all that gives us life and energy , especially the love and care of those who have helped us learn and grow, those who have stayed with us in hard times, those who have listened to us and accepted us as we are. We receive with thankful hearts all that nourishes us in faith, hope and love. Through us may others know I kindness and compassion. In the spirit of the one who taught us to love one another. Amen.

Readings

First a reading I picked out for our Kaylee to read at the Zoom service- she and her mother [Sandra] will be doing the readings. If you have a young person in your life, they might enjoy this reading.

A Young Person learns to Trust by Laurie Hays Coffman

My mom is my shepherd; I shall not want. She makes me lie down under cool, downy comforts.

She watches me play beside still waters. She restores my soul.

She leads me in paths of respect, responsibility, and goodness, for I am her namesake!

Yea, even though I walk past monsters in the dark, I will not be scared, because my mom is always near me.

Her hands and her voice, they comfort me.

Mama sets the table and cheerfully calls me to dinner even in front of big, mean bullies.

She anoints my skinned knees and broken heart with kisses. She smiles and throws me a towel when my cup runneth over.

Surely God's peace, power, and mercy shall uphold me all the days of my life, for my Mother taught me to dwell in the house of God forever.

John 14:15-21

14:15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the One who sent me, and he will give you another Helper to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, since the world neither sees her nor recognizes her. But you recognize the Spirit, because she remains with you and will be within you. I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, and you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in God and you are in me and I am in you. Those who keep my commandments are the ones who love me, and those who love me will be loved by my Father. I too will love them and will reveal myself to them."

Special Music

If Ye Love Me by Thomas Tallis sung by the Tallis scholars

<https://youtu.be/1zGOsN0pAw0>

Reflection

This is a Mother's Day, a Christian Family Sunday like none other. So many cannot be with their mothers today because of self-isolation and because of closed borders or locked-down care facilities. So many parents cannot be with their adult children today, for the same reason. Quite often I've been off visiting my mother this weekend- this year that's not an option. And some of us are wondering - when will we get to see our older or our younger family members?

This, added on to all the losses some may be feeling because of mothers or children no longer in this life - whether recent or long-ago griefs. Also of course, those widowed may miss the spouses who used to make sure they got a nice Mother's Day Dinner and perhaps some flowers. This, added on to the inner struggles some may experience because their family relationships are not what they would like them to be- or because they feel anxious, distressed or anguished by what is going on with their loved ones.

And always, every Mother's Day or Christian Family Day, some feel excluded because they do not have children or living parents or the kind of family life we think of as traditional - though really it's only one possibility. LGBTQ+ individuals often feel very much excluded, if their ways of loving and relating are judged or seen as lesser- or if their families of origin have rejected them.

And some suffer in these days because of abuse and violence in their family- staying home might be the most dangerous thing they can do.

For some of us, our friends, our social circles, our groups, our church circles might be like family. But when we are limited to those who actually live with us- life becomes pretty solitary, even for introverts. And some of us are the same ones who can't go see our mothers or our adult children or our siblings, if we have any.

Why do I dwell on such sombre things? I guess because I tell it as it is. And I am always thinking about who is sitting in church or who might be reading my words. I want you all to know I am listening- I know what is going on or has gone on for some of you - and if I don't I'm ready to listen any time.

And I can truly say- I have gone out of church services feeling sad , excluded, forgotten. As a single person and an only child and one who's lived away from family for years, if all I hear is stories of people going home to celebrate with the families, or if I hear that marriage or parenting are the only ways to be fully human, well, I'm not going to feel as if there's any place for me. I have always promised myself : I do not ever want to do this to anyone who attends my church services. I want you to know you are loved, your life matters, your experience matters- and there are many paths to being fully human and fully alive. My path and your path and anyone else's path do not have to be the same.

So what can I say about Mother's Day and Christian Family that won't leave any of you out? Or would not leave out those who could be with us but don't know if they'd be Ok here??

First, I would say, absolutely , totally celebrate whatever you can celebrate about this day. Maybe you are with your mother or your child today . Maybe some of you are getting extra quality time because you got to lock down or bubble together.

Maybe you can't see your mother or grandmother or children or grandchildren or other family members today but you look forward to a phone call or Skype or Zoom. Or perhaps you've ordered them or they have ordered you a special treat.

Maybe you have cherished memories- be they of mother or be they of others who were like mothers to you. I have special memories of many women of an older generation who encouraged me and mentored me and loved me through the years. I wouldn't be where I am without them. And if you shed a tear, well, that's what you need to do. . As we love, so we grieve.

Maybe family really means friends, rather than relatives for you- whether the friends are still living or not. Think of those whose birthdays you've helped celebrate, or who have made sure your birthday didn't go by forgotten. Think of those whom you visit with most years, when travel is possible. Think of those with whom you share tea or a lunch regularly - or used to. Those who go on trips with you. Those who used to help you, or still do help you, when you need. I found out about many of those each time I've moved , each time I've needed cat care, or faced cat woes.

And if family includes pets, why not? I love seeing your pets at church. Next week I'll bless any in attendance and remember any you want me to remember. And especially as we isolate into separate households, our animals are those with whom we don't have to physically distance. They wouldn't let us.

So celebrate, remember, and mourn, just as you need to, and know that is your story, and we honour it, and we surround you and your story with love.

And secondly, remember , we are here is to be a beloved community - one who lives the Love commandments - that's our job, to do that for each other and for anyone else we can befriend, encourage, serve, comfort- whatever is needed. And physical isolation does not stop us from being who we are and doing what we are here to do. If any among us is struggling, please tell me or whomever- we can listen, care, pray for you, send Love and Light, think up random acts of kindness. And each of you can offer the priceless gift of your care and presence to each other. Think of us as family - we are here to share love with each other. It doesn't get better than that. Especially in these times.

Last but not least, where love is, there is God- yes, God is Mystery, Something More, Something beyond- but God as Spirit is as close to us as our own breath. Even in your loneliest moments, know this : Spirit lives in your heart, your soul, your deepest self- breathing love through all your being. As St Paul said , Spirit prays through you even when you do not know how to pray. You pray even when you don't know how or you don't even know you are praying.

No matter what is going on for you today, know that we are here to love you- every one of us, every one of you. And know that Divine Love, Holy Breath, Unending Compassion live within you, and around you, and beneath. You are always and forever part of God's family with all those you have ever loved and ever will love. Thanks be and blessed be!

Reflective Piece. Love Is the Sign of Intangible Joy [Robertson,MV 89] sung by Lori True , tune Slane.

<https://youtu.be/HIBAX0cCKel>

Love is the touch of intangible joy; love is the force that no fear can destroy; love is the goodness we gladly applaud: God is where love is, for love is of God.

Love is the lilt in a lingering voice; love is the hope that can make us rejoice; love is the cure for the frightened and flawed: God is where love is, for love is of God.

Love is the light in the tunnel of pain; love is the will to be whole once again; love is the trust of a friend on the road: God is where love is, for love is of God.

Love is the Maker, and Spirit, and Son; love is the kingdom their will has begun; love is the pathway the saints all have trod: God is where love is, for love is of God.

Minute for Mission. Loved by Generations: Sherbrooke Lake Camp

Many people who attend summer camp come from a long line of campers, following in the footsteps of their parents and grandparents. That is one of the amazing things about camp—it's loved by generation after generation. Our gifts for Mission & Service make United Church camps possible. United Church camps are like a quilt created from many different pieces of fabric, all different colours and textures. A family quilt tells the story of the family who created it. From a scrap of fabric from a toddler's dress to lace worn at a fancy family gathering, each quilt piece recalls images of fun times together. It is no different for a camp family, where memories are sewn together to become the very fabric of the camp. Sherbrooke Lake Camp in New Ross, Nova Scotia, began in 1964. The children and youth who attended then are now the parents and grandparents of today's campers. The camp also offers a two-night Family Camp. By gathering people to have fun and give thanks for creation and community, camps like this one can transform people for the better! Thank you for making this possible. At Sherbrooke Lake Camp: We believe in kids. We are a safe space to learn. We believe everything is possible. We think big, but simple. We play until we can't. We are the place to explore faith. We inspire and motivate listening to spark understanding. If Mission & Service giving is already a regular part of your life, thank you so much! If you have not given, please join me in making Mission & Service giving a regular part of your life of faith. Loving our neighbour is at the heart of our Mission & Service.

Your gifts of money, prayers and friendship are all treasured and gratefully received.

Offering

Today we give thanks for all the places of loving care and lifegiving connection in our lives, all that reminds us that we are loved, and all our opportunities to show love and care to others. We offer what we have and what we are, to sustain our common life in this place, and so that others may know a place of love and belonging, and receive the gifts they need for wholeness and abundance of life. May we trust- each gift, each act, each word of compassion touches hearts and lives even beyond our seeing and knowing. Amen.

Special Music : Mothering God, You Gave Me Birth

words adapted from Julian of Norwich, tune Maryton arranged by Tom Trenney]

<https://youtu.be/4cQX1SmwSn4>

***Mothering God, you gave me birth
in the bright morning of this world.
Creator, source of ev'ry breath,
you are my rain, my wind, my sun.
Mothering Christ, you took my form,
offering me your food of light,
grain of new life, and grape of love,
your very body for my peace.
Mothering Spirit, nurt'ring one,
in arms of patience hold me close,
so that in faith I root and grow
until I flow'r, until I know.***

Prayers for the People

Loving God we thank you for all those whose loving care warms our lives.

We thank you for all who have helped us learn and grow,

All who have believed in us and given us a chance to spread our wings.

We thank you for those we count as family and loved ones now,

Whether here with us today or present with us in spirit.

Today especially we give thanks for [*insert the name[s] of any for whom you give thanks, who have been mothers or like mothers to you*]

May we see your face in those we cherish as family or friends or neighbours.

Even in these times, may we reach through doors and borders with our loving thoughts- as we share what warmth and safety we can with our dear ones.

May we find consolation in being connected in spirit, if we cannot physically meet in these days,

Trusting in that Love which is indeed the 'sign of intangible joy'.

May your Spirit of comfort touch those- including those among us- whose family life might be painful and troubled today,

And those who long to see loved ones and cannot ,

Those who bear burdens of anxiety or grief ,

Those mourning so many recent losses of parents and children and grandchildren,

Those who grieve the loss of companion animals who were part of the family,

Those who come to this day with long-ago loss and grief.

And those in many lands whose family and community life is torn apart by war, violence, or COVID.

All those for whom this is a particularly lonely and anxious day-

In a moment of silence we hold in love and light all who need our prayers ..

May we all take our place within your family, your web of compassion and friendship, surrounded always by the cloud of witnesses, those loved ones gone before but yet remaining in spirit.

These and all the prayers of our hearts we gather into the prayer shared by many around the world and across the ages. Our Mother/Father who art in heaven.

Announcements

given in yesterday's Coop and added to if necessary, in the covering letter to this email

We Sing

VU 556 Would You Bless Our Homes and Families Farquharson/Klusmeier, from Strathroy United Church

<https://youtu.be/O7cSq6c3nvA>

*Would you bless our homes and families, Source of life who calls us here;
in our world of stress and tension teach us love that conquers fear. Help us learn to love each other
with a love that constant stays;*

teach us when we face our troubles, love's expressed in many ways.

*When our way is undemanding ,let us use the time that's ours
to delight in simple pleasures, sharing joys in gentle hours.*

*When our way is anxious walking and a heavy path we plod,
teach us trust in one another. and in you, our gracious God*

*From the homes in which we're nurtured with the love that shapes us there,
teach us, God, to claim as family every one whose life we share.*

*And through all that life may offer, may we in your love remain;
may the love we share in families be alive to praise your name.*

*Let us reach beyond the boundaries of our daily thought and care
till the family you have chosen spills its love out everywhere.*

Help us learn to love each other with a love that constant stays;

teach us when we face our troubles, love's expressed in many ways.

Blessing

Let us go forth to grow and flourish as beloved members of Jesus' family.

**Let us go forth to offer light and warmth to all those we meet,
That they may find the freedom and the confidence to embrace
The growth and new life God intends for them.**

And may the blessing of God who brings you to birth, who gives you new life and walks with you as your companion be with you always. Amen.

We Go Forth Singing Go in Love [Don Besig] with Westminster Presbyterian Church Greensburg, PA
https://youtu.be/k_5i5IQDTzM

***Go in love, have no fear. God will guide you and is always near.
Go in love. Take God's hand. God will hear you and will understand.
May God's light forever shine upon you.
May God's peace be always in your heart.
Go in love; face each day.
God will lead you and will show the way.
Go in love and live in faith. Amen***