



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

East Central Ontario Regional Council (ECORC)

Service for Communities of Faith – June 2, 2019 Sunday of East Central Ontario Regional Council Inaugural Meeting

Acknowledgement of the land

The United Church of Canada acknowledges that its buildings and ministries, from coast to coast to coast, are on traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples. For thousands of years, Indigenous peoples have walked on this land; their relationship with the land is at the centre of their lives and spirituality. We are gathered on the traditional territory of the Mississauga peoples, and acknowledge their stewardship of this land throughout the ages.

Lighting of Christ Candle

One: We give thanks for the light of hope—unrelenting and inexplicable.

All: Our hope in Christ shines on.

One: We give thanks for the light of peace—strong and unafraid.

All: The peace of Christ lights our way.

One: We give thanks for the light of joy—persistent and unpredictable.

All: The joy of Christ brightens our lives.

One: We give thanks for the light of love—hot and holy.

All: The love of Christ comforts and challenges.

One: Now let us light the Christ candle as we celebrate our covenant with Jesus.

All: Thank you, God, for your light in this world through Jesus Christ.

One: The light shines in the darkness.

All: And the darkness has not overcome it. (SpaciousFaith.com)



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Call to Worship

One: As disciples who follow Jesus, human yet divine child of God.

All: We affirm our personal covenant with God through a loving relationship with Jesus Christ.

One: As members of this community of faith we are bound together in covenant love.

All: A covenant that binds each of us to God, to one another and to the church universal.

One: God willingly and unconditionally enters this covenant of love.

All: God tells us. "I will be your God and you will be my people."

Hymn:

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for your precious gift of wisdom which gives each of us the ability you go beyond our differences and see the gifts of all of your children.

Jesus our teacher, our Rabbi, our friend, we thank you for binding this community together, and all communities of faith in a unity that can override our differences.

Sophia, Holy Spirit, we thank you for the individual gifts we have been given; the gifts we need to make choices that heal our relationships with all our relations and for all creation.

God, three in one, let us be aware of your presence in all of its diversity, as we worship here today. Amen.



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Time for the child in all of us



Spend time in worship *identifying some of the many gifts God has placed in the people of your congregation.*

Start with the obvious ones like the musicians and teachers. Go to those who organize whatever needs organizing and those who are good listeners and “are there” whenever someone needs a friend. Be sure to include gifts seen in children and youth as well as in adults.

Give children (and all worshipers?) a sheet of paper featuring a large gift box. Encourage them to *draw or write about gifts God has given them.* Suggest that people sitting near a person might add a gift they see in him or her. Tell them to take the paper home and post it where they will see it each day this week so they can add to it as they recognize other gifts God has given them.

Hymn:

Scripture

Psalm 105 (VU Page 105 – Part 1)

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Message

A Popular Translation: 1 Corinthians 12: 1-12

4 There are different kinds of gifts the Spirit give us, but they all come from the same Spirit.

5 There are different ways to serve people, but they are all based on the same Lord Jesus who serves us all.



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6 There are different ways God works among us, but they all find their start in the same God. He does all these things among all of us.

7 Every single one of you has some gift that tells others the Spirit is working in you. That gift is for the good of everyone.

8 Through the Spirit, God gives one person the word of wisdom, but he will give another person the word of knowledge by the same Spirit.

9 God gives faith to another by the same Spirit. He gives the spiritual gift of healing to another through the one Spirit.

10 God gives another person the power of miracles. He gives another the ability to tell one spirit from another. He gives another the ability to speak in strange spiritual languages. And he gave the power to understand those languages to someone else.

11 One and the same Spirit makes all these gifts work.

12 But he divided them up, and gave different gifts to different people, just the way he wanted to.

As the East Central Ontario Regional Council gathers for its first meeting, we reflect upon the many gifts needed to create something new in this Region. Our theme scripture explains the power of the Holy Spirit to give many gifts to different people yet we are part of one body that needs to work together.

Paul's discussion of the spiritual gifts took place in the context of scandal among the Corinthian faithful. This was a charismatic community, defined by the exercise of various gifts: speaking in tongues, healing, prophecy, etc. The Corinthians took pride in their gifts to the point of bragging and one-upmanship. The leadership of the community must have felt threatened, for the Corinthians were splintering into groups with their own rivaling leaders.



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Paul argued against notion of their narrow notion of grassroots leadership. Instead, he argued for the big picture. He began with the leadership of the Spirit. For Paul, God was in charge. And Paul saw the leadership of the Spirit in the context of God's plan. This was Paul's cultural presumption. The Jewish notion of creation (and prayer) could be simply stated that all things came from God, so they would return to God. Therefore, in the end times, all things would return to God. In his Christian view, all things would return through Christ.

The Church had various types of spiritual gifts, but there was only one Spirit. It had various types of ministries, but there was only one Lord Jesus upon whom the ministries were modeled and rooted. And these gifts and ministries worked together in the way God the Father willed them to work together. Beneath his argument that the Trinity defined the Church was the notion that Church should be based on harmony, just as the God, Jesus, and Spirit worked harmoniously.

There were various gifts given to various people, which was true. But what were those gifts? And why were they given? Paul answered the last question first. The Spirit gave its charisms for the good of the community, not for the glory of its members. So, to envision these various gifts as the means to achieve the common good, there had to be a hierarchy of gifts. Here, Paul tried to make a cultural accommodation to the Greek community. The highest virtue in the Greek world was wisdom, the ability to make clear and correct judgments. Such a virtue was higher than knowledge, for it guided the person to seek the right knowledge. Both wisdom and knowledge led to firm faith. The rest of the gifts were based upon spiritual abilities and the needs within the community.

But, in the context of the letter, Paul emphasized the unity of the Church with the image of the Body of Christ.

How do people know we are Church? We communicate the sense of the Church when we work in harmony with others and use our Spirit-given gifts to serve others. Church is not a place for egos. It is a place for charity.



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Have a conversation about the gifts within your Community of Faith.

What are your gifts? How have you used your gifts within your community?

Hymn:

Opening Prayer

Prayers of the People

To God who welcomes all in love, let us pray for the good of the church and the concerns of those in need.

Prayers of the People, may include prayers for:

- *the new Regional Council,*
- *your own Community of Faith,*
- *crisis around the world,*
- *creation and the effects of climate change, and*
- *personal prayers for those you know.*

God of every land and nation, you have created all people and you dwell among us in Jesus Christ. Listen to the cries of those who pray to you, and grant that, as we proclaim the greatness of your name, all people will know the power of love at work in the world. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn:



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Closing Words

In you, O Lord our God, we find our joy,
for through your law and your prophets
you formed a people in mercy and freedom,
in justice and righteousness.
Pour your Spirit on us today,
that we who are Christ's body
may bear the good news of your ancient promises
to all who seek you. Amen.

Service prepared by:

Reverend Jean Wilson, Retired Supply Minister - Castleton Grafton Pastoral Charge