

Sunday May 25, 2025_
Easter VI

WE GATHER

LIFE AND WORK OF CHURCH

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – *Create your own*

Identify the First Peoples in your area who have lived in relationship with the land for millennia.

Offer thanks.

Learn something (new) about their history, culture, spirituality.

Offer thanks.

Consider your own relationship to the land and all of creation.

How does your relationship affect the way you live?

How might you live in reconciling ways – respecting others and all of creation?

Offer thanks.

INTROIT:

CALL TO WORSHIP: Psalm 67

¹ May God be gracious to us and bless us

and make God's face to shine upon us,

² May God's way may be known upon earth,

and God's saving power among all nations.

³ Let the peoples praise God;

let all the peoples praise God.

⁴ Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,

God judges the peoples with equity

and guide the nations upon earth.

⁵ Let the peoples praise God;

let all the peoples praise God.

⁶ The earth has yielded its increase;

God, our God, has blessed us.

⁷ May God continue to bless us;

let all the ends of the earth revere God.

WELCOME

Welcome to this sixth Sunday in the season of Easter.

In this season of 'new life', we gather to hear stories of Jesus' ministry, his acts of compassion and his shared with all.

We witness his desire to bring people into community.

And we seek, within this time, to create a space where all might experience the power of his acceptance, love and healing.

From wherever you find yourself along life's path, may you know that just as Jesus was as apt to welcome the sinner, the stranger and those on the margins, as he was to receive his friends, we, in his image, are all invited to be part of this worshipping community and are welcomed into this circle.

OPENING HYMN:

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE – Revelation 21: 22-27

We light the Christ candle, a sign of God's glory, which shines over the city as its light.

The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.

In God's glory the gates of the community will never be shut by day and there will be no night there.

As this candle shines in our midst, may we see within it the hope that nations will be guided by God's justice, inspired by God's love and strengthened by the assurance that Jesus' light continues to shine even in the darkest of nights.

OPENING PRAYER (PRAYER OF CONFESSION)

God whose glory shines over us and within us.

May it be your light of justice, healing and hope that we offer to one another.

When we are tempted to go it alone, remind us that we are your beloved community.

When we contribute to conversations and systems that prevent people from being their true selves, forgive our self-centred ways.

When we become the obstacles over which people stumble, call us back to the stories of Jesus that revealed time and again the desire for healing and abundant life for all.

As we gather to offer praise and worship to you, remove any barriers between us that we may be united in our call to share with others the transformational power of your unconditional love. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE:

Broken Hallelujah – Leonard Cohen

THEME CONVERSATION:

June 10th, 2025, marks 100 years of The United Church of Canada. What a great time to write a memoir of our churches.

How to write a memoir of a church:

To write a memoir, follow these steps:

1. ***Narrow your focus:*** Choose a theme or specific aspect of your church's life to focus on. For example, how has your church responded to poverty in your community: establishment of a foodbank, number of volunteers working in the local foodbank, guest speakers talking about the impact on poverty, letter-writing campaigns to elected officials seeking changes to support economic justice, etc.
2. ***Include more than just your story:*** Consider broader context and other people involved. This might be sharing the story of ministry partners, or the story of someone who was impacted by your presence in the community.
3. ***Tell the truth:*** Be honest and authentic and funny
4. ***Put your readers in your shoes:*** Use descriptive language to create impact. Instead of saying we had children in our Sunday School, tell us how many and the gender makeup. Like the year the minister had 8 boys in confirmation class.
5. ***Employ elements of fiction:*** Use storytelling techniques to bring your story to life.
6. ***Create an emotional journey: Show how events impacted you.***

*HYMN:

Introduction to the lesson:

The word “gospel” literally means “Good News.” Scholars refer to the first five books of the New Testament, or Christian Scriptures as “gospels” for a reason. They are stories about the goodness of Jesus’ life, teachings, and ministry, and ultimately his resurrection. Today we listen to a story from John’s gospel. John is different than the other 3 narratives. It tells different stories and has no parables. But each story should sound good to our ears, and the preacher should be looking

to present a grace in the text and in the world that balances off the trouble in the text and in the world. Let us hear the story from John's gospel.

John 5:1-9

After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes.

In these lay many ill, blind, lame, and paralyzed people.

One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.

When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"

The ill man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am making my way someone else steps down ahead of me."

Jesus said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk."

At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk. Now that day was a Sabbath.

Response:

Jesus Christ has risen.

Jesus Christ has risen, indeed.

Reflection:

This is a reflection for 2 voices

Introduction:

One: I'm thinking of training for and participating in a tough Mudder.

Two: What's a tough Mudder?

One: It's a 15 km obstacle course playing to some common fears. Those involve fire, water, electricity, heights, and all this while you run, climb and crawl through mud and water.

Two: Good for you. You won't mind if I don't join you.

Trouble in the text and in the world:

One: It's one thing to choose to participate in a tough Mudder or an obstacle course of any kind, but it's a whole other thing to have blocks and obstacles put in the way

of wholeness in your life. Take the guy in today's lesson for example. Imagine how many times over the course of 38 years he tried to get to the pool. There was no one to help him get into the water and in fact there were people getting in his way.

Two: The same is true today for those who are seeking healing and wholeness in their lives. There are structures that get in the way of that happening.

Structures, like rituals and rules.

Structures like economic and political agendas.

Structures, even like religious traditions that block a person's access to getting what they need in order to live fully.

One: Jesus cuts through the obstacles to give healing to the man in today's story. By doing so, he smashes the rituals, traditions and structures that kept this man down. By simply saying: "Take up your mat and walk," Jesus restores this man's physical health and provides him the opportunity to be in community with others again.

Two: We are called not to get in the way or be a stumbling block for another person's healing and wholeness. Nor are we to hold healing hostage while we check to see whether someone deserves that healing when our traditions and our rituals make it hard for another person to get what they need

Exploring Need:

One: As a community of faith, we need to let go of our desire to control. And instead maintain the grace of forgiveness and healing we have found in Christ. Let us experience the difference this can make especially for those who so desperately are in need of it.

Mission: We look around us, and we see individuals who have chosen to exclude themselves from this community of faith for a variety of reasons. Some because of hurt and trauma experienced in faith communities. Some are purposely excluded because of who they are or who they love or how they identify or what they're able to do and some of their limitations. Our task is to figure out a way to help everyone get to the pool. Our job is to be Christ for them and to find a way to break through all the obstacles and provide healing to our community.

How:

Think about how our community of faith has actively removed barriers to allow someone on the margins to access wholeness. What examples come to mind as to how we have done this in the past?

(some time for responses/stories/ideas)

What other things might we do to remove obstacles and offer welcome and healing in our current context and time?

(some time for responses/ideas)

Conclusion:

Two: I will be thinking of you as you do your tough Mudder. Even though that physical obstacle course is not for me, this conversation has helped me remember that when obstacles prevented the guy from getting to the healing waters of the pool, Jesus brought those healing waters to him. Maybe we, as a community of faith, can act and speak in ways that connect those who feel alone, ill and forgotten into the abundant and healing waters of God's beloved community.

Invitation to give:

As United Churches offering continues to be a part of worship. It is set just after the service of the word as an opportunity for folks to respond to what God has said to them. It is an act grounded in faith filled experiences and not duty.

Did you know that there are some churches that demand that members submit their income tax statement every year and then a bill is sent to each member equal to 10% of a person's gross income.

At Easter we give knowing that what we plant in the work of our community of faith, will yield a great harvest.

Give generously and reap bountifully.

***We present our tithes and offerings: (p. 958 VU 2X)**

Halle, halle, halle-lu-jah!

Halle, halle, halle-lu-jah!

Halle, halle, halle-lu-jah!

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

***We dedicate our gifts:**

Breathe new life into us today and use our gifts to fulfil your promise of a coming realm of peace and security for all. Amen.

Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession and the prayer of Jesus:

God of wholeness and peace, in the name of the Risen One we give thanks and pray. Thank you that prejudice, hate, abuse of power and death do not win or have the last word, but evidence of the truth of the resurrection is all around us.

Thank you that you have called us to be an Easter People; you have given us your anointing and set us apart for a task to tear down and to build up so that we may be known as the repairers of broken-down walls, and the restorers of streets to live in.

We pray today for those who struggle in body, mind and spirit.

We pray that there be no barriers to wholeness...

we pray for those who care and serve that they do not grow weary of the work of healing.

Silence

We pray, also for those who are bound by grief and sorrow; guilt and shame.

May there be relief of the burdens they carry through the love and compassion of others and your loving kindness and presence.

Silence

For our world we pray. May the Christmas blessing of peace on earth and goodwill to all be set loose on the earth and may the Easter spirit of resurrection and new life take root in hope and grow.

Silence

Fill us with your Spirit that we may do the work of Jesus, the Word made flesh.

May we be about the ministry of reconciliation **and may we make new.**

Silence

We now pray as we have been taught.... *"Our Father..."*

(You may choose to use an alternative version of the Prayer of Jesus as found in Voices United on pages 916 and 921)

Amen.

*CLOSING HYMN:

***BENEDICTION: John 14:23-29**

As we go forth in service,

May the Holy Spirit, the Advocate whom God has sent in Jesus' name continue to teach us and remind us of the good news of Jesus Christ (John 14:26)

May the Peace of Christ which he gives to us, touch hearts so they no longer are troubled or afraid. (John 14:27)

And may the love of God make its home with us, inspiring us to share its glory and light with all we meet (John 14:23)

God, our God, has blessed us.
let all the ends of the earth revere God.

***CHORAL COMMISSIONING:**

Suggested hymns:

From More Voices:

- # 12 "Come Touch Our Hearts"
- #28 "God of the Bible"
- #49 "When We Seek Language"
- #115 "Behold, Behold"
- #120 "My Soul Cries Out"
- #138 "My Love Colours Outside the Lines"
- #142 "Oh, a Song Must Rise"
- #158 "In Star and Crescent"

From Voices United:

- #179 "Hallelujah, Hallelujah Give Thanks"
- #183 "We Meet You, O Christ"
- #222 "Come Let Us Sing"

