



**Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge of the United Church At
Home Worship
Sunday June 14, 2020**



Minister: Rev. Tammy Allan

*We gratefully acknowledge that we are on the ancient and traditional lands of
The Blackfoot Nation, the people of the Treaty 7,
and of Metis Region 3. May we cherish and care for the land and the people,
as those who came before us did.*

Your Worship Space

As you worship at home, try to create a space for that. It could be as simple as lighting a candle (either flame or battery); or placing a small cross or a symbol that has meaning for you in front of you. Now that the weather is more amenable, consider worshipping outdoors.

If you are alone, perhaps start a journal, as you reflect on the worship experience. Or, perhaps call a friend and share this time with them over the phone. If you are with one or two others, enjoy the conversation that arises...as you practise safe distancing.

Opening Call / Prayer

You name us, O God, with grace we do not fully understand; for you call us to love as we have been loved. You send us, O God, to people and communities in need; for you call us to see and respond with compassion. As we do our best to follow your call, give us the kind of strength and courage that was shown to us in the life and ministry of Jesus. We pray this as disciples on the journey. Amen.

Musical selection Gather Us In This is a hymn I have always liked, and is found in the Lutheran Hymnal. My apologies for the commercial, you can skip it after a few seconds. Click here to listen : <https://youtu.be/lbNXqjwh8is>

Reading for today

Matthew 9:35 - 10:8

In this passage, first we hear of Jesus teaching and healing and then calling the 12 disciples and sending them out to minister to their community as well.

³⁵Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; ³⁸therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest."



10Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. ²These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;⁴Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ ⁸Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

A Message for Today

Reflection

Lately, the “Black Lives Matter” movement has over taken COVID 19 in news reports. It started, we know, with the unjust death of a black man, at the knee of a white police officer. The man was handcuffed and on the ground, and the manner in which he was held down led directly to his death. It was a senseless and unnecessary act.

And it happens all too often, in the US. But in Canada, there are similar stories. Just this past week, our Canada news told of systemic racism in our RCMP, related to treatment of indigenous people. COVID 19 has raised issues of racism as well – particularly against people of Asian descent. I personally know people who have experienced this.

The concerns are close to home, too. I was saddened to read in our local Albertan that the woman who was endeavouring to organize an event around “Black Lives Matter” received a great deal of negative, hurtful response.

Our world is broken and hurting. Where is our will for compassion, for loving our neighbour?

Compassion. Jesus was going about teaching and healing in the synagogues of the towns and cities that he travelled to...and he encountered crowds of people, for whom he had COMPASSION, because they were to him like sheep without a shepherd.

Sheep without a shepherd. I don't have much knowledge about sheep-herding, but I do know that in Jesus' time, the shepherd was vital to the maintenance of the health, the safety, and the security of the herd of sheep. Without a good shepherd, much could be lost.

When Jesus sees these crowds of lost sheep – lost people - he calls out to his disciples to pray for more labourers for the harvest. Jesus was so good at speaking in metaphor...making his listeners think about what he was saying, to seek the deeper meaning in his lessons.

He was asking for prayer for people, for labourers, called to do the work of teaching and healing the crowds that gathered wherever he went. The labourers he needs are his friends and followers, the disciples...whom he then named, one by one, as apostles.

The Greek word apóstolos means "one who is sent out," giving it a proper connection with the word **apostle**. The word's original English **meaning** of "messenger" referred directly to Jesus' apostles, messengers of the good news. Jesus sent out others, to share in the work of healing the world around them.

Although 12 were named, many more followed in the way of Jesus, teaching and healing as he did. These 12 named, they represented the many walks of life that Jesus' followers came from. There were fishers and tax collectors, those who were against the Roman occupation, and those for it, among the 12.

The number 12, in and of it self is significant too – as it recalls the 12 tribes of Israel. Just another piece of literary symmetry so often found in biblical text.

Twelve were named and sent out to extend compassion to others and care for God's people. Jesus does this, knowing the work is too great for any one person to undertake it alone. Yet, in order to take up this call, the disciples must let go of their former lives, and any hopes of wealth or prestige. Discipleship would not necessarily be an easy road to follow.

We know that the many ways Jesus taught and healed caused the religious elders of his day to distrust him, to see him as a threat to their own power and authority. And in turn, his commissioning of others to go and do likewise put them in a light of suspicion too. It would indeed have been risky to practice compassion in that day.

Yet Jesus instructed those 12 (and likely others after them) to go not into foreign lands, but to the lost of Israel – to go where they would be seen as part of the community, to heal and teach in places where the likelihood of being accepted was greatest. In fact, in reading the verses following today's reading, Jesus tells the disciples not to stay where they are not welcome, but to wipe the dust of those places from their feet and move on.

It's as if he was telling those he had commissioned to go and do the work, to live as compassionate followers of the way...but to go where they are accepted...not to stay where their labours were not welcomed. Perhaps it is this passage that helps inform the way the United Church of Canada approaches mission and outreach work...in that our denomination goes where it is invited, never does it impose it's mission and evangelism where it has not been invited.

So...what does this all mean for us? I guess it depends on whether or not you identify yourself as an apostle. In my own study this week – I reminded myself of the difference between disciple and apostle...although the two words are often used inter-changably... A disciple is one who learns; the word finds it's origins in the Latin for pupil or learner.

Apostle means someone who is sent out, on a mission – in the case of today's gospel, Jesus speaks of those he sends to teach and heal.

So, a disciple learns, an apostle takes the learning and applies it to life's realities.

Jesus teaches about compassion, his disciples learn from him, and are called to go and do as he has done...to go and be apostles.

We learn and grow in faith, through biblical reflection, worship, prayer, study, alone and in community...but are we not also called to then go and live as apostles, practicing what we learn? Are we not called to be messengers of the good news, in our own communities?

Think about why you participate in the life of this faith community...why you worship, why you read the bible, why you pray...and how meaningful it can be to share that story with others. Those can be such rich conversations, when we share the story of our faith with another...when we speak of our own good news experiences. In the telling we may open doors of wonder and discernment for another. That too can be exciting stuff!

Does that prayer and study call you to the next step – the action piece, to apostleship? For in these times we are in, times when a pandemic is bringing to the surface acts of racism, when globally, we are hearing stories of racial injustice, we need to step up. We need to speak out when we encounter racism. We need to be part of the action of healing our broken world.

There's one more piece of today's passage I want to lift up...it's the very last line you read in today's passage: "You received without payment; give without payment."

Translated into more modern language: – You experienced generosity, so live generously!

The message – in the next few lines is that piece around taking nothing with you on the journey, but trusting that God will provide, through those you meet on the journey. It is indeed about accepting the gifts of hospitality offered to you, and then essentially, paying that forward, by being generous with what you have to give.

Kind of a piece of stewardship wisdom, isn't it. You receive generosity, so live generously. It's what you do with what you have...how you give of yourself, that counts.

That message, take nothing with you, reminds me that we can be about living compassionately, following in the way of Jesus every day...we don't need to carry special equipment or tools, we can simply live with compassion, live as followers of the way of Jesus, in all we do. It is through our compassion and love that we can begin to heal our world, and build relationships of trust.

Today, I leave you with words of one of our Chinook Region staff, Chris Mah Poy, who is Program Support and Administrative Assistant. He shared his story this week of his own personal experience of racism. It is a story that difficult to read, and yet Chris leaves us with a light of hope. I'm grateful to him for sharing this on the Chinook Winds newsletter.

Beneath the Surface Encountering Racism in the Grocery Store

By Chris Mah Poy

It's been a long time since I was called by a racial slur. I have to tell you that it still hurts as much as it did when I was twelve. I am privileged enough to be mostly "white-passing" in my day to day interactions. But for some reason to this person, on this day my multi-ethnic background was evident. And they felt compelled to tell me who they felt was really responsible for this COVID-19 pandemic, that culture and ethnicity were somehow responsible for the spread of this terrible disease.



I have been reading and watching in horror as politicians question the loyalty of Canadians born overseas, and as Asian Canadians are assaulted waiting for the bus or going to the corner store. And I, like many of my fellow Calgarians, marched with furious justice in my heart against the systems of injustice in our society.

I am certainly not naïve to insidious and systemic injustice in our country that is more overt now than it usually is. I know that the roots of colonialism, racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, Islamophobia, sexism, homophobia and transphobia are all a lot nearer to the surface than we might choose to believe. But moments of great turmoil and crisis really do expose that which lays just beneath the surface. It brings to light the pain and heartbreak of neglect and the silent struggle of our neighbours. And it compels us not just to compassion, but to action.

I certainly hope that we as a church and a society don't waste this opportunity to call for justice when so many of the injustices in our communities have been exposed. From eldercare to social, and economic inequality, domestic violence, colonialism, and racism.

In my darker moments, a quote from political philosophers creeps into my subconscious: *"The veneer of civilization is very thin."*

But a joyous hymn also fills my heart;
*"My heart shall sing of the day you bring.^[L]^[SEP]
Let the fires of your justice burn.^[L]^[SEP]
Wipe away all tears.^[L]^[SEP]
For the dawn draws near.^[L]^[SEP]
And the world is about to turn."*

P.S. Ask me about Ha Ling Peak. And Google Bill 1.

Hymn **Will You Come and Follow Me** <https://youtu.be/o469PRLdbHU>

This Week's Minute for Mission Is called "Second Chances." It's about Emmanuel House, part of Stella's Circle in St. John's Newfoundland. Click here to view the story:

<https://youtu.be/NbqtIMI7HdU>

Prayers for this day

O God, we pray for our world:

for those who live and work in places of conflict and those who strive to bring peace.

For those who care and protect the environment, and those who work to renew the earth.

For those who feed the hungry and heal the sick...we pray.

We pray for our country:

for those who are in positions of power and influence, that they would be open to wisdom and compassion, and also action.

For those who are alienated and excluded, that we may be open to standing with them, and working for inclusion.

We pray for our community:

For families in strife, and the people who support them in finding new ways of being, for people in need of healing, or struggling with illness or injury, and those living with loss...

For all who keep our community safe and well – emergency workers, RCMP, health professionals, especially in this time of pandemic...

For those who teach and care for our children...especially in these days, as they do that over internet and at a distance, while wondering what the future holds...

For those who care for our elders and support them in their homes, or in care facilities, and for the sense of isolation many feel because of COVID restrictions...

We pray for our families and friends, as we all learn to live in the new normal of our time, for patience, for creative ways of adapting to the changes we need to make...

O God of grace, we bring you our prayers, those spoken, and those held in our hearts. Hear us this day, O Holy one, as we pray the words that Jesus taught us to pray.

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. 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.



A Blessing for Today

Let us go to share God's gifts and grace, and be witnesses to the good news of Jesus, alive in the Spirit. Amen.



shutterstock.com • 793353016

Thank you so much for using this worship resource! Feel free to share it! We are grateful for your connection to the Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge, and to both Olds and Sundre United Churches. As the time of COVID 19 distancing progresses, know that we are still the United Church in our communities, striving to serve you and the community. Our ability to do that requires financial support, and we are so very grateful for those who are able to continue to supporting us in these challenging times. We also are aware for some, this time of pandemic has created hardship, and we pray for peace and hope.

If you already give to the church with PAR (Pre-Authorized Giving) things will carry on as usual, unless you need to make a change.

If you give through envelopes, it would be greatly appreciated if you would mail your offering in, or bring it to the office, however please call first to confirm someone is there, as in these days our staff must be cautious as well.

And finally, if you are not a regular giver, but wish to support our ministries, we would gratefully accept your gift. Amounts over \$20.00 will be tax receiptable, at the end of the year. Our church mailing addresses are:

Olds United Church 4810 50th Street, Olds AB. T4H 1E4

Sundre United Church PO Box 614 118 Centre Street North Sundre AB. T0M 1X0