



**Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge of the United Church At  
Home Worship  
May 24, 2020 Seventh Sunday of the Easter Season  
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**

Here we gather, carrying into this time the joys and worries of the week, the height of our personal experience, the anxieties of all that the future may hold.

Here we gather, in prayer and preparation. Here we connected with a community, and we can hold one another in compassion, even though not together in worship.

Here, in this time, we remember, Oh God, that the work you have called us to do, we no not do alone. Thanks be. Amen.

**Musical selection Lord Listen to Your Children Praying**

Click here to listen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BK3KJTyUqX0>

**Readings for today**

**Acts 1:6-14**

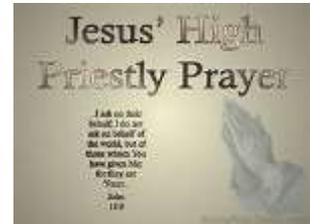
<sup>6</sup>So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup>He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." <sup>9</sup>When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup>While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. <sup>11</sup>They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

<sup>12</sup>Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. <sup>13</sup>When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the

Zealot, and Judas son of James. <sup>14</sup>All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

### **John 17:1-11**

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, <sup>2</sup>since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. <sup>3</sup>And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup>I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup>So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.



<sup>6</sup>I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup>Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; <sup>8</sup>for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. <sup>9</sup>I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. <sup>10</sup>All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them.

<sup>11</sup>And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

### **A Message for Today**

On the church calendar, Thursday was Ascension Day – the day that the Christian church traditionally remembers Christ’s ascent into heaven. Not a day that’s very well known by many Christians – and certainly not known well in the secular world. Of course, it doesn’t hold nearly the recognition that Easter Sunday or Christmas do...or even Pentecost Sunday, which is next week.

Ascension Day always falls 40 days after Easter Sunday. In some traditions, it is an important holy day.

We, in our United Church tradition, if we recognize the Ascension of Jesus at all, do so on this Sunday prior to Pentecost – Pentecost being the day that we celebrate the birth of the early Christian Church. In addition to recognizing the Day of Ascension, today we mark the last Sunday of the Easter season. After next week we move into a long season of what we call “ordinary time.”

Looking at today’s scriptures, we understand that the Book of Acts is authored by the same person who authored Luke’s Gospel. And this particular passage for today—whether one accepts it as literal truth or as a metaphorical way of describing a mystical experience – marks a time when the followers of Jesus were seeking to understand what

their mission was to be about – to understand how they would carry on the work of their rabbi, their teacher, their friend Jesus. The passage offers that message from Jesus to his disciples – in verse 8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

That message makes it clear that Jesus is calling his followers to tell the story, to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth – to spread the good news far and wide.

An important thing to note in this passage, too, is that among Jesus’ named followers, not only are there men, but women are now included in this group of people gathered in that upper room to pray and support one another in this time of transition in their lives— Mary is even named. The group was gathered in that upper room after Jesus’ death. They were remembering when they were there together with Jesus – and as today’s story unfolds, they are looking to the future and discerning what path they are to take next. They were doing this in response to the commission Jesus had given them to be witnesses to his ministry and his vision of shalom, of peace for all.

We have this tradition of reading the Gospel after other passages – but it might have made more sense today to read our 2 scripture passages in opposite order – for today’s gospel occurs as Jesus was nearing the end of his time with his disciples, and nearing the end of his life.

Our Acts reading has Luke telling the story – remembering Jesus’ time with his disciples, as the time is drawing near to his arrest. Jesus, in today’s second reading, in the gospel, had gathered for a meal with the disciples and others – and following their shared meal, offered a prayer for his friends.

Jesus was praying for unity among those he would leave behind to carry on his ministry. It’s as if he sensed that the changes they were about to face – the journey of loss and grief they were about to walk, would challenge their relationships with each other – the fear, the loss, the confusion over what was to happen to Jesus – it would cause anguish and pain, and perhaps Jesus was afraid of how that would impact the lives of the people he was entrusting to carry on with his mission and ministry.

We are in a time in the life our faith communities where it feels like change has been thrust upon us. That change has been happening gradually, as our congregations age, as fewer and fewer of our younger generations find a home in the church, as our buildings – once busy all week, and bursting at the seams, also age, and too often stand empty.

Then there is the change that has been thrust upon us in these of days of COVID 19. No longer able to worship in our buildings, receiving worship on line, connecting with telephone calls and careful distancing, struggling with the financial implications that arise with both the slower change and this most recent transition.

In all of it, we, as communities of faith, find ourselves facing levels of anxiety and stress, as we seek to discern new paths, new models of being the church of today. It’s no secret that with stress can come division, disagreement, conflict.

Jesus was aware of that, I believe. Hence that prayer – “so that they may be one”. That prayer repeats several times in this chapter of John’s gospel. From verse 21, it is found on the outer ring of our United Church Crest, “ut omnes unum sint,” “that all may be one.” Those words offer a reminder that we are a united and uniting people.

That is not to deny that conflict exists – we are after all, human. However what it does say, I believe, is that we are called to seek ways to live as one, to seek the common good for all of creation, and to find healthy ways to resolve our conflicts.

Jesus was praying for unity – “Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.” The prayer is for us, today, as well.

Jesus’ had finished the work God gave him to do – bringing his friends into relationship with God – and now he is praying for them – for them to be as one, to be community – caring for one another, supporting one another, while they continue Jesus’ ministry of bringing others to that place of knowing God, and to that place of eternal life and love in God.

So...what does this all mean to us...to you and me, as disciples? The prayer, that all may be one, is just as needed today as it was in Jesus’ time.

The vision and hope for us is that we come to know God...and that we live out of the love of God, in unity... as one with each other; that together we might continue to live out the commission to take the gospel to all the ends of the earth.

I’m thinking big picture...one with each other is about how we, in Olds – Sundre Pastoral Charge are in relationship with each other – AND it’s also about how we relate with our ecumenical friends in our area, AND it’s also about how we are in relationship with other faiths; AND about how we are in relationship with people who name no faith connection...AND about beyond Olds and Sundre, and beyond Alberta, and beyond our Canadian borders. It’s about how we are in relationship with others **LOCALLY** and **GLOBALLY**.

How to be in relationship, in the way God calls us to be, takes discernment, careful consideration of why we call ourselves followers of the way. It takes careful discernment around who God is calling us to be, and how we are called to serve God.

That kind of discernment involves prayer. Jesus, in those last few hours prior to his arrest was praying for his disciples, for their on-going relationships with one another, and for their future ministry together. As disciples, part of carrying the message of Jesus to the ends of the earth is to be open to praying, and being prayed for. And in that, we also need to be open to listening, to hearing what God is saying to us.

That is one of the most incredible gifts of my ministry – those times when I am invited into prayer with individuals or families, or groups – times when I am asked to join them in some of the most sacred moments of life – be it church life or a family’s life. And equally incredible, is when someone offers that gift of prayer to me or to a group I’m part of – to be enfolded in words of care and love, lifted to the creator. That is to be surrounded in grace.

And that's what Jesus was giving to those gathered in that upper room – it was a vital part of his ministry, and of the relationship he had with God...as much as it is about the disciples growing relationship with God. He was praying that they would find their way, that they would be one, in unity, as they continued to follow the way of Jesus.

And that relationship with God is for us too, that prayer is for us as we seek ways to be the church in 2020 and beyond, that we will be one. In turn, we too have been given the gift of praying for others, of communicating from our heart to the very heart of God. We may do that through thought, through word, through deep, deep silence. In that prayer, may we too, seek unity, and hope and peace and truth, for our communities, for the world, to the very ends of the earth.

I leave you today with a the words of Maren C. Tirabassi, words of prayer based on our gospel reading for today. It is entitled

### Jesus Prayer for the disciples

God, it's time...

Glory is going to hurt -  
Help the when they touch the glory.

Small is tender –  
Remind them to stay small and close to each other.

Circles are concentric –  
Give them the widest arms and deepest reach, circles in circles in circles.

I gave them the words,  
Living, truthing, wriggling words-  
Let them remember that are meant to be spoken, not worshipped.

They are in the world-  
Surely they'll notice it's the one you love so much.

Being One, in spite of all the un-one  
That is out there,  
Will keep touching them, touching us.

Protect them from shattering.  
I am coming.



**Hymn**    **Draw the Circle Wide**    <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BK3KJTyUqX0>



### **This Week's Minute for Mission**

Our gifts for Mission & Service support partners working to unite North and South Korea peacefully.

Published on:  
January 15, 2020

Over 65 years ago, the Korean War ended in an armistice agreement. The agreement created the Demilitarized Zone, or DMZ: a place where the two parts of the country can come together. The two parts of Korea, North and South, have very different political and economic systems and ideologies. Some may think the differences are too great for the two countries to overcome and unite.

Mission & Service of The United Church of Canada supports partners like the National Council of Churches in Korea that are working to unite both countries through a path of peace. There have been non-violent gatherings at the DMZ as well as walks for peace. We are thankful to be in partnership with Korean Voices for Peace and the World Council of Churches, which lift up the plight of families who are divided and a region that is still in conflict. The United Church is part of Korea Peace Now! Women Mobilizing to End the War, a global campaign to get a Korean peace agreement by 2020. We pray that reunification will take place and are thankful that we are able to support this path through our gifts for Mission & Service.

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.

### **Prayers for this day**

Loving God, you have created us to be in relationships, to love and be loved. We give thanks for the people in our lives with whom we share our lives...families, friends, neighbours. We lift up in prayer people who are experiencing loss; and all the complications that this time of pandemic brings to that experience.

We pray for those in hospital, and for those in our circle of faith recovering at home; or undergoing treatments for illness.

O God, we give thanks for the security of house and home; and pray for those who do not have a place to call home; who must rely on shelters or refugee camps, or who sleep rough, in parks or under bridges, often going hungry, and risking dangerous situations.

We pray for places around the world torn by political conflict or war; for places where the pandemic has created further conflict and oppression.

God of grace, we give thanks for this day, for the sun and rain, and new growth all around us. We celebrate the communities of which we are a part, and pray that we may live in right relationship not only with all people, but with the earth and all its creatures.

Bless us, as we pray the words of Jesus...

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 into the week ahead with joy in our hearts, and certain that God's love is with us and will never leave us. Thanks be to God! Amen.

*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 50<sup>th</sup> Street, Olds AB. T4H 1E4*

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