

Worship Service

April 28th, 2024

Worship leaders: Simba in Steinbach Lesley in Niverville Pianist: Julie in Niverville

PRELUDE

WELCOME

Simba

WE GATHER

NUC-Lesley

We gather as a community, to celebrate community and harvest the fruit of community. We unite as community under the Creator's love, care & provisions. We celebrate one another's presence and the love they bring with them. As a community, let us open our hearts to the blessings of one another's gifts offered in this worship setting, drawing inspiration, hope and joy. Let us worship.

We light these candles, as symbols of our community with God, and one another.

SONG: MV7 Gather Us In x2 (remain seated)

Words and music copyright © 2005 David Hann

Gather us in, ground us in you.
Gather us in, ground us in you.
Gather us in, gather us in,
ground us, ground us in you.

LIFE AND WORK of our churches and communities

Lesley/Simba

SONG: MV79 Spirit, Open my Heart

Words: Ruth Duck copyright © 1996 The Pilgrim Press Music: Traditional melody, Ireland Arrangement: Arthur G. Clyde copyright © 1997 The Pilgrim Press.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.

As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving.

Spirit, open my heart.

God, replace my stony heart
with a heart that's kind and tender.
All my coldness and fear
to your grace I now surrender

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.

As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving.

Spirit, open my heart.

Write your love upon my heart
as my law, my goal, my story.
In each thought, word, and deed,

may my living bring you glory.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.

As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving.

Spirit, open my heart.

May I weep with those who weep,
share the joy of sister, brother.
In the welcome of Christ,
may we welcome one another.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.

As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving.

Spirit, open my heart.

PRAYER

Creator God; Creator Spirit; Creator Christ. In the beginning, a time only known to you; you lived in community. You invite us to live in community with you and with one another. You have taught us to love our neighbor as ourselves. In this moment, we recognize that community has made us who we are. Help us, through your grace, to respond to your invitation, to live in community and serve in community, and for the community. We seek the renewal of our faith, our hope and our commitment to the ideals of Jesus. teach us to seek wholeness and guide us in our efforts to express our true selves. Bless us with true humility, true kindness and other virtues that may benefit our community, as we live in community. Amen.

THEME TIME “Jesus is the Vine”

NUC-Judith & Emily

Greet the children, holding a bunch of fresh grapes and a handful of raisins...

Hello, children of God!

Do you like fruit? What is your favorite kind of fruit? I love fruit, and one kind I particularly enjoy is (*hold up grapes*) these: grapes! Do you know anything about grapes? They grow in bunches on vines...the vines come out of the ground and provide the nutrition and things that are needed to produce the fruit. Grapes have to stay close to the branches and vines for them to keep giving fruit. What would happen if one of these grapes fell off of the vine and sat in the sun for a while? It wouldn't be fresh and juicy anymore, would it? In fact, it would sort of wither and shrivel up...kind of like these raisins! (*Hold up raisins.*) Now, there's nothing wrong with raisins. They're great for cookies or cereal or a quick snack. But compared to these big beautiful grapes, they look pretty sad and lame, don't they?

Did you know that Jesus talked about grapes? People in those days knew a lot about farming and planting, and a lot of them probably had vineyards where they grew grapes. Jesus said that He was the vine, and that we are the branches. What might that mean? He was explaining how important it is for us to stay connected to Him. Just as the vine provides nutrition that helps fruit grow on a plant, Jesus gives us all that we need to grow in our faith. The branches on a grape vine have to stay connected to the vine so that they can produce delicious fruit. Otherwise, they'll dry up and wither like these sad little raisins. If we walk away and abandon faith, we'll “shrivel up”, too!

We need to stay close to Christ so that He can produce “fruit” in us. Of course, we aren't going to start sprouting grapes or anything. Spiritual fruit refers to things that help others and show that Jesus lives in and through us. Those are things like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...(if you want to quote the list from Galatians). How do we make sure we are connected to Jesus? We read God's Word and study the Bible. We pray, talking to God and listening, too. We go to church so we can be connected with other “branches” that also abide in Him. Most importantly, we recognize that Jesus is doing the work and producing fruit through us. We don't have to do a special set of tasks or have “enough faith.” We stay connected to the “vine” of Jesus and let the Holy Spirit develop its fruit. We trust in God and rely on Him for all things, staying close to Him and thanking Him for giving us life and hope. Why don't we thank Him for that right now?

SONG: VU187 The Spring has Come

Words: 1992 Shirley Erena Murray Music: 1993 Colin Gibson Words, Music copyright © Hope Publishing Company.

The spring has come, let all the church be part of it!

The world has changed, and God is at the heart of it!

New light, new day, new colour after winter grey.

New light, new day, the spring has come, let all the church be part of it!

The sun is warm, let all God's children play in it!

The world expands, let's spread the Gospel way in it!

New leaf, new thrust, new greening for the love of Christ.

New leaf, new thrust, the sun is warm, let all God's children play in it!

The spring has come, new people are the flowers of it.

Through wind and rain, new life is in the showers of it.

New bud, new shoot, new hope will bear the Spirit's fruit.

New bud, new shoot, the spring has come, new people are the flowers of it!

SPIRITUAL READINGS:

Scripture Reading: John 15: 1-8

SUC-Jan

15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Contemporary Reading

NUC-Lesley

The joke was that the seasons go:
summer, fall, winter, spring, winter, spring,
winter, spring...
One year it snowed in June, heavy. Leaves
were out;
we'd been mowing lawns for a month.
Trees and branches fell under the weight.
We stood in the street assessing the damage
when up popped the neighbor's automatic
sprinklers,
faithfully watering eight inches of snow.

The seasons of the soul don't progress
smoothly,
or even always forward. Sometimes winter
follows spring.

When your secret life is dark and cold,
when prayer has become strangely pointless
and God, once warm and near, is now a sheet
of ice,
fear not. This happens.
The Mysterious One is not absent;
the world hasn't slipped on its axis;
there's nothing wrong with you.
God is right there, frozen solid with you.
Be patient. Look for little bits of love and
beauty.
Don't expect a warm spring sunrise. Just little
bits.
In time you will thaw out and once again
you'll hear its warbly little song.

SONG: VU371 Open my Eyes

Words and Music: Clara Scott Public Domain.

Open my eyes, that I may see
glimpses of truth thou hast for me;
place in my hand the wonderful key
that shall unclasp and set me free.

*Silently now I wait for thee
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes,
illumine me, Spirit divine!*

Open my ears, that I may hear
voices of truth thou sendest clear;
and while the wavenotes fall on my ear,
everything false will disappear.
Silently now I wait for thee

*ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my ears,
illumine me, Spirit divine!*

Open my mouth, and let me bear
gladly the warm truth everywhere;
open my heart and let me prepare
love with thy children thus to share.

*Silently now I wait for thee
Ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my heart,
illumine me, Spirit divine!*

REFLECTION

The main theme of this section is abiding in Jesus, the true vine. It is not a parable nor an allegory but a *mashal*, a Semitic form that includes an image and its application to real life. A *mashal* doesn't represent a people but a figure, an individual. It may mean a proverb and a parable. It is more than just one representation of an idea.

Living in the Prairies, farming is a common phenomenon, albeit, a different kind. They might have different crops but it's essentially farming. Jesus have used the language of the peasants of his neighborhood. Jesus used metaphors, proverbs, idioms & idiophones of his language in an attempt to express himself in ways that could be understood by his audience. He used sheep, the mastered seed, weeds & wheat, fig tree, to mention just but a few. In this passage, it's the vine. Jesus once used the kitchen language like yeast, bread, oil & lamp. He used lost coins, denarii, & others. Peasant life is commonplace for Jesus' teachings. Jesus doesn't use complex examples or metaphors, & yet it still remained difficult for the audience to understand him. Otherwise it could be a truism, at least for some biblical scholars who have for so long, accused them of being a bunch of blockheads.

Vine trees could be wild, with sharp &, if not bitter fruit. The taste may not always be reflected by the looks. That probably points to the reason why John always used the phrase; **“come & see” which means, “come & experience for yourself.”** The invitation is extended to and **following Jesus is an experience**, more than just a spectacle to watch. We experience something by involvement. In my world, they say; “there is no substitute for experience.” Others say; **“Experience is the best teacher.”** In other words, the branches should never be questioned, both in physical proximity and essentially in their fruit.

Being True to Ourselves

True vine, means there is a chance, there are many versions. I am looking for your truthfulness. Are you your true version? Are you there to impress, or are you authentic? Is this the true you? In all situations, when you are loved, supported or vulnerable; are you the true version of yourself. Many

times we hear of pretenders & imposters; I don't want to say hypocrites. People not so authentic. In one of our many discussions with some folks who do not shy away from sharing their thoughts, one individual said; "I don't use Christian to describe myself. I am a follower of Jesus." I think this person realized how sweeping generalization has often misrepresented many folks in the city or countryside. We are called to be followers of Jesus, to live out Jesus' teachings. We are called to be true versions of ourselves, as a people gifted in various ways. To be vulnerable for the best results and be resilient in unfavorable seasons.

With Our Limitations, We Keep Going

A lot of Work Got to Happen. We may look great but we can be better versions of ourselves. Are we open to learn from others? The vine is a work in progress. If Jesus claims that the true vine goes through pruning, it means we are not exempted either. We need a lot of guidance, rebuke or help to be effective in our service. We may need to be ready to go through painful moments to make ourselves better. Life takes us through rough roads, tough seasons and difficult moments. Not every difficult time is going to destroy us. ("Not meant"). Does this sound pessimistic? I have no idea. Does this mean we should embrace suffering? Maybe not. At least for me, but sometimes we need to endure difficult moments if they seek to improve us or our lives. For instance, surgical procedures are not inherently bad. They are moments that are seeking to offer help. In our faith context,

We Need Community

The word ABIDE points to community. It suggests that the best result is achieved in community with others. We are better off with others. We can do better and more when we come together and stay together. Every branch would love to grow away from the tree but not removed from the vine. We are the body of Christ, followers of Jesus' ideas, living actors of such a story, that the world may experience God's love through us.

I cannot achieve anything without others' help. I need to be shaped. A lot of me needs attention. Sometimes criticism is not easy to take, it makes us better. Let us take it. We need the courage to accept rebuke, correction, objection, or even rejection. Remember we have all gone through schooling (formal or informal), training, formation, and guidance. All that made us a better people.

I sometimes wonder how strong we are in some areas, and how we are weak in others. There is a lot of weakness (bad) in our strengths (good) and lot of strengths (good) in our weaknesses.

Community of Equality/Fairness/Justice

Vena quoted Gale O'Day who suggested that; "In a vine, branches are almost completely indistinguishable from one another; it is impossible to determine where one branch stops and another branch starts. All run together as they grow out of the central vine." There is an absence of hierarchy in this vision of the church as branches of a vine because they all belong to the same vine and are tended by the same vinegrower. Therefore, there is no status, class, or privilege, but everyone is equal, everyone is responsible for bearing fruit. The only condition is to love each other as Jesus loved us. We have probably lost sight of this basic idea in our highly structured churches, denominations and other religious fora.

SONG: MV161 I Have Called You by your Name

Words and music: Daniel Charles Damon copyright © 1995 Hope Publishing Company

I have called you by your name, you are mine;
I have gifted you and ask you now to shine.
I will not abandon you; all my promises are true.

You are gifted, called and chosen;
you are mine.

I will help you learn my name as you go;
read it written in my people, help them grow.
Pour the water in my name,
speak the word your soul can claim,
offer Jesus' body given long ago.

I know you will need my touch as you go;
feel it pulsing in creation's ebb and flow.
Like the woman reaching out,
choosing faith in spite of doubt,
hold the hem of Jesus' robe, then let it go.

I have given you a name, it is mine;
I have given you my Spirit as a sign.
With my wonder in your soul,
make my wounded children whole;
go and tell my precious people they are mine.

OFFERING INVITATION

Each person should give as they have decided for themselves; there should be no reluctance, no sense of compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.

SONG: VU537 Your Work, O God

Words: Calvin Weiss Laufer 1927. Music: Neil Dougall ca. 1831. Public Domain.

Your Work, O God, needs many hands
to help you everywhere,
and some there are who cannot serve
unless our gifts we share.

Because we love you and your work,
our offering now we make;
be pleased to use it as your own,
we ask for Jesus' sake.

OFFERING PRAYER

Merciful God, from whose generosity, we have received the life and service of Jesus Christ. We have received from you all that we have, and all that we are. You entrusted in our care, our lives, skills, time and resources. Teach us to offer in appreciation, our service, our time, our talents, & treasures to the service of your realm, your church and for the service of one another. Accept the offer and bless the giver. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: Mission And Service Stories

NUC-Lesley

Healing Through Storytelling

Storytelling is a powerful way to preserve and share history. The theatre performance, Bunk #7, does just that.

Bunk #7 shares the true story of six boys rioting against the mistreatment and many forms of abuse they received at Edmonton Indian Residential School in St. Albert, Alberta, in the early 1960s. Written by the late Nisga'a MLA Larry Guno, the play is based on his own experience at the residential school and named for his bunk number.

The cast features Indigenous youth and young adults, offering a powerful way for the cast and audiences to learn and share the story of cultural resilience. In November 2021, the play premiered at Raven Theatre in British Columbia to a full audience. With overwhelming support, the performers

went on a tour of northwestern BC to share the transformative journey. Performances in fall 2023 were once again met with great support. Your gifts to Mission and Service open opportunities for storytelling to move forward in an impactful and powerful way. Thank you for your generosity.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Loving & caring Creator; we bow before your holy presence, and the within the warmth and cover of each other's love and support. We thank you for many blessings that make our lives good. We thank you for that we have, family & community. Yet our hearts sometimes sink in deep pain for the losses we have suffered. The losses that include our freedom to move, travel, going out and enjoy. The loss of friends, loss of relatives and family through death. We have lost our community due to various reasons. Restore us, make us whole, heal our brokenness, sustain our faith, renew our hope.

We pray for those who are hurting among us, those who struggle with crisis situations, struggling with grief or some other conditions. We ask that they find comfort, support and assurance of your love.

We pray for peace to abide, that our world may be a safe place for all. Remind us that we are not perfect, yet we believe we can make a difference regardless of our limitations.

Bless us and bless our worship; through Jesus, who taught the disciples the prayer we will sing;

SONG: VU 959/974 The Lord's Prayer/with Amens

Music VUV 959: David Haus © 1986 G.I.A. Publications, Inc. Music VU 974: Jim Strathdee© 1985 Desert Flower Music. Words: Public Domain

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread,
forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil
for the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
Now and forever.
Amen! Amen!
Hallelujah, amen!

INTRO TO SONG: Rob and Elinor Johns

NUC-Judy

SPOKEN: VU 185 You Tell me that the Lord is Risen

NUC – Judy/Judith

Words: 1987 Rob Johns, used by permission of Sheila Johns Music: English traditional melodyMusic, Arrangement: Public Domain.

You tell me that the Lord is risen,
that you have seen his face.
Then tell me why you crouch in fear
and hide within this place.
You say that he spoke words of peace
and stood just as before.
But 'til I touch his very flesh
I will not trust your joy.

will soothe the pain that tears my breath.
How well do I recall his face,
compassion, strength in fear.
How deep my grief that he should die.
Spare me your words of cheer!

You claim a resurrection here,
that God has broken death.
No easy words like these

“Now peace be with you.
Come, my friend, my wounded body see.
Let the rich courage of your doubt
bring you to fresh belief.
Fear not to wonder at the Word,
to search the depths of grace.

Reach out and touch, here is my hand.
Receive the gift of faith”

“How blest are they, how fortunate
who know without the sight.
But Thomas, you are favoured too,

for searching yields its light”
So may each pilgrim in the Way,
each road to Christ be blest,
'til lips declare, “My Lord and God!”
Christ's body one at last.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC: VU 614 and/or VU 185

BLESSING

May you go in and live in community with one another. May God’s love continue to prune your lives in ways that will make you a better follower of Jesus. May the Holy Spirit continue to remind you of your calling and teach you to accept the constructive interaction with other beings. Go in peace. Amen.