

WORSHIP ONLINE

Sunday, July 26, 2020



This Sunday:

We live, these days, in such a goal oriented, purpose driven, control minded society, it's hard to imagine that anything important could happen without human initiative. Perhaps, during these days of summer, Jesus' message might be to step back and trust that there is a will for good operating in our world that is not subject to our control.

Prelude: MV 48 "I Can Feel You Near Me God"

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Welcome

Welcome to Prairie Spirit United Church online.

I want to remind you that there will be no service next week, or for the rest of August. Information about alternate services is available on our website or social media, or by phoning the church office. There will also be information about starting back again in September.

Immediately following the service today we will have coffee and conversation by Jitsi conference. You can find the Jitsi link in the Weekly Update that was emailed on Friday.

Whoever you are, wherever you are, you are a child of God, you belong to Christ's community, and we are grateful you are here.

Grace and peace be with you!

Land Acknowledgement

For thousands of years Indigenous people have walked on this land. The relationship with the land is at the centre of their lives. We acknowledge the first peoples and their stewardship of this land throughout the ages. The land we worship and live on is part of Treaty 1. Our water comes from Treaty 3 and our hydro from Treaty 5 territories. We acknowledge errors made in the past by those arriving from other lands and we pledge to work towards right relationships with all First Nations people.

Lighting the Christ Candle

Jesus is the light of the world. Whoever follows him will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Live as children of light.

Hymn: MV 28 "God of the Bible"

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God of the Bible, God in the Gospel,
hope seen in Jesus, hope yet to come,
you are our centre, daylight or darkness,
freedom or prison, you are our home.

Not by your finger, not by your anger
will our world order change in a day,
but by your people, fearless and faithful,
small paper lanterns, lighting the way.

God in our struggles, God in our hunger,
suffering with us, taking our part,
still you empower us, mothering Spirit,
feeding, sustaining, from your own heart.

Hope we must carry, shining and certain
through all our turmoil, terror and loss,
bonding us gladly one to the other,
till our world changes facing the Cross.

Those without status, those who are nothing,
you have made royal, gifted with rights,
chosen as partners, midwives of justice,
birthing new systems, lighting new lights.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.
Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.

Readings

Psalm 119:129-136

119:129 Your decrees are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them.

119:130 The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.

119:131 With open mouth I pant, because I long for your commandments.

119:132 Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your custom toward those who love your name.

119:133 Keep my steps steady according to your promise, and never let iniquity have dominion over me.

119:134 Redeem me from human oppression, that I may keep your precepts.

119:135 Make your face shine upon your servant, and teach me your statutes.

119:136 My eyes shed streams of tears because your law is not kept.

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

13:31 He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field;

13:32 it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

13:33 He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

13:44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

13:45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls;

13:46 on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

13:47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind;

13:48 when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad.

13:49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous

13:50 and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

13:51 "Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes."

13:52 And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Reflection: "No Doubt The Universe is Unfolding" - Rev. Paul DuVal

This reflection is from Steinbach United Church.

The essential teaching of Jesus had to do with as he called it, "The Kingdom of God", or "The Kingdom of Heaven". There are many good reasons to reinterpret that language in this day and age, kingdom is patriarchal not democratic, we no longer live in a kingdom, and except in fairy tales and a few far away nations, our children are not exposed to any understanding of what that means. So scholars, interpreters, and preachers have worked hard to create metaphors that are contemporary and inclusive.

We hear terms like the realm of God or the reign of God, both of which still sound a little old fashioned. Some creative folk have coined "The Kin dom of God" to signify the great extended family of God present throughout the world, and implying inclusion and equality. I myself like "Commonwealth of God" although it doesn't flow very well, and carries echoes of a government with ties to Great Britain. Common wealth, like Common good, suggests to me a place where all are equal, and the blessings, the gifts, the wealth of the world is shared in common equally to benefit all, especially those who need it most. A state where good will and cooperation will overcome all challenges and problems, where good science prevails over politics if you will.

In the past I have spoken of the Gospel of Matthew as an instruction manual for disciples; those who have been sent out to welcome, heal, proclaim the advent of God's new program, and challenge the status quo.

Those same disciples also need a touchstone especially when things look particularly bleak.

When we look around, it is easy to imagine that the "commonwealth of Heaven" is nowhere to be seen.

Cases of COVID-19 seem to be on the rise worldwide, even as numbers are low in Canada. Economic stress is high. While most of us in Manitoba are ok, schools are uncertain for the fall, and threats of a second wave cloud the future or at least make it uncertain. Jesus' promise that "the kingdom is near you, within you, among you, seems hard to verify at best, and downright false at worst.

Into that mix comes this brief parable about a mustard seed. It is small, but when planted, with some patience, and hope, and vigilance, we may see something surprising. It might be a vaccine, or a surge of empathy, or the resourcefulness of communities to rise to the occasion and transform anxiety into compassion. Or perhaps it's like yeast, you can't see it work, you can't hurry it along, you can't control it in any way. But the results are worth waiting for.

We live in such a goal oriented, purpose driven, control minded, society, the idea that we could watch and wait, seems too passive and irresponsible.

Jesus reminds us the seed will sprout, with your support, or in spite of your indifference, whether you notice it, or not. God's universe will unfold, you can't speed it up, or slow it down, but you can tell people what you see, and what you hope, and where you will invest your energy and your love.

I'd like to end with a poem by Wendell Berry called Wild Geese

What We Need Is Here

Horseback on Sunday morning,
harvest over, we taste persimmon
and wild grape, sharp sweet
of summer's end. In time's maze
over fall fields, we name names
that rest on graves. We open
a persimmon seed to find the tree
that stands in promise,
pale, in the seed's marrow.

Geese appear high over us,
pass, and the sky closes. Abandon,
as in love or sleep, holds
them to their way, clear
in the ancient faith: what we need
is here. And we pray, not
for new earth or heaven, but to be
quiet in heart, and in eye,
clear. What we need is here.
– Wendell Berry, "Wild Geese"

This is summer, the time of growth and renewal. Let's watch, and wait, and prepare to be surprised. What we need is here. God's kindom is in our midst.

Amen.

Hymn: VU 766 “Psalm 42 As the Deer Pants for the Water”

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As the deer pants for the water,
so my soul longs after you;
you alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.

Day and night I cry, my heart is breaking,
tears my only food;
while my enemies jeer and taunt me,
saying: “Where is now your God?”

You alone are my strength, my shield,
to you alone may my spirit yield;
you alone are my heart's desire,
and I long to worship you!

Why am I so sad, so troubled;
why must suffering be so long?
I will hope in you, my God and saviour,
praise you with a song!

Offering Invitation

O God, we know very little of your plan for us, but we will pursue you in the mystery of our faith that you know us, love us, and teach us about yourself and ourselves all at once.

We belong to one another. In gratitude, we offer ourselves and our gifts to be used for your mission.

Prayer of Dedication

O God, may these offerings of our money, possessions, time, and self be used to provide for the needs of your people. May they be a source of joyful testimony to you, your compassion, and your provision in our world. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Let us centre ourselves in prayer, so we may ask God to bless all those in our lives, who are in need of support, guidance, peace and love.

We pray for the Central African countries of the Republic of Congo, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe and for the Christian community of the Quakers, formally known as the Religious Society of Friends. We pray for the churches and leaders of Prairie to Pine Regional Council, particularly remembering the Souris Pastoral Charge and St. Paul's United Church.

We pray for the world, as it contends with the COVID-19 virus, especially for the states of Texas, Arizona and Florida, who have seen a terrible spike in the number of cases in recent weeks.

We pray for an end to war in Afghanistan, which began on October 7, 2001, and has been raging for the past 19 years, and for the Afghan people who have suffered under a series of wars since 1978.

Mighty and tender God, hear us as we pray, for you bring release to the captives and rest to the weary.

We pray:

for the church throughout the world in its life and ministries.

for the nations as they strive for peace and justice.

for all who suffer: the sick, the sorrowful, the lonely and the oppressed.

for peaceful relationships among friends and among strangers.

Tender and mighty God, in your loving purpose answer our prayers and fulfil our hopes.

In all things for which we pray, give us grace and wisdom to accept your will, for the sake of Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Mother
 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.
 And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
 For thine is the kingdom,
 and the power, and the glory,
 for ever and ever.
 Amen.

Hymn: MV 161 "I Have Called You by Your Name"

Words and Music: Daniel Charles Damon, 1995; French trans. David Fines, 2006
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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.

Closing & Benediction

Thank you for choosing to spend this time with Prairie Spirit. You are a valued member of our community.

Let us return to the world where there is wonder, and delight, and renewal.
 Let us go as disciples, seeking God's presence in the world of nature and the world of people.
 Let us go knowing that God's grace goes with us,
 God's love surrounds us,
 And God's spirit guides us, now and always,
 Amen.

Postlude: "And To You Be Peace"

© L. Campbell, composer

Resources used: Voices United, Regional Council Prayer Cycle for Prairie to Pine, Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

Announcements

PSUC responds to COVID-19

Although the provincial government has moved to Phase 3, at Prairie Spirit we are finalizing the report from the Ad Hoc Committee prior to making any further changes. The Oversight Council, under the direction of the Prairie to Pine Region, created an Ad Hoc Committee which is developing protocols and procedures for gradual re-opening of Prairie Spirit United Church. Some of our building partners and rental groups have expressed interest in returning and since their numbers are typically under 25, we are making arrangements to accommodate their requests while honouring government direction and our PSUC protocols. Essentially, the building continues to remain closed until further notice. This includes the suspension of in-person worship services and all mid-week groups/meetings.

While our church building is closed, staff will continue working from home. Our minister Rev. Paul DuVal is available. Emails and voice messages are being monitored regularly. To contact the church office, email PrarieSpiritUC@shaw.ca or call 204-832-1000. To leave a voice message, please press 1.

Online Services in August

For the month of August, we will be taking a break from our online worship services and online coffee time. We encourage you to check out online services at St. Charles Headingley. <https://headingleyuc.wordpress.com/sunday-worship-2/>

Emergency Pastoral Coverage in August

During the month of August, if any pastoral emergencies arise, please contact:

August 1 - 10
 Rev. Dr. Michael Wilson
 Charleswood United Church
 204-832-3667
mwilson@charleswoodunited.org

August 11 until the end of August
 Rev. Cathy Maxwell
 St. Charles Headingley
camcmaxwell@mymts.net

Open Call for Lay Worship Leaders

The Worship Team is looking for members of the congregation who are interested in leading a worship service during the month of September. Rev. Paul DuVal will be leading worship for two Sundays in September and 1-2 Sundays will be a lay led worship service.

Tasks include preparing the Order of Service, leading prayers and liturgy, and preparing the reflection. If you are interested in being involved, please contact the church office. Email PrarieSpiritUC@shaw.ca or call 204-832-1000. To leave a voice message, please press 1.

Have you been missing baking for Prairie Spirit?

We have decided to provide cookies for West Broadway and St. Matthews-Maryland Community Ministry. These inner city ministries have continued during the pandemic to provide bag lunches for large numbers of people. This is one way we can support their efforts in the community!

The next date is Monday, August 10.

Please bring your cookies to the church parking lot at noon. We need them wrapped in saran wrap, lunch bags, or tin foil in groups of 3.

If you would like to help or to arrange for pickup, please contact the church office. To contact the church office, email PrarieSpiritUC@shaw.ca or call 204-832-1000. To leave a voice message, please press 1.

Announcements (cont.)

Website Private Login

A private login for our website has been created to provide those connected to Prairie Spirit access to meeting minutes of the Oversight Council, Annual Reports, and more.

- You can access the private login by scrolling to the bottom of the website. <https://prairiespirituc.org/>. You will see three words on the right side that say "LOGIN", "REGISTER" and "RECOVER PASSWORD".
- Please begin by clicking "REGISTER". After you have completed the registration, our Office Administrator will review the information that has been submitted and will either approve or deny your request for access. Thank you for your patience.
- Once the Office Administrator has approved your request, you will receive an email. You will be able to log in by clicking "LOGIN" on the website.
- If at any point you forget your password, you can reset your password by clicking "RECOVER PASSWORD".

If you have any questions or require assistance, please email PrairieSpiritUC@shaw.ca.

Ways to Continue Giving

Although we are unable to worship at the church, our expenses are continuing. Your continued financial support is welcome, needed, and encouraged. There are a number of ways in which you can continue to contribute financially to Prairie Spirit.

- Donations can be dropped off at the church mailbox or mailed in.
- If you'd like to go on PAR, the form can be found at: <https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/par-brochure.pdf>
Please complete this form and mail it along with a voided cheque to Prairie Spirit United Church. If you'd like to change your PAR givings, please email PrairieSpiritUC@shaw.ca.
- You can make a donation to Prairie Spirit online through CanadaHelps. <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/prairie-spirit-united-church/>
(For step-by-step instructions on how to donate through CanadaHelps, visit our website: <https://prairiespirituc.org/giving/>)
- You can also send an e-transfer to PrairieSpiritUC@shaw.ca. You will need to create a security question. In the message box, please indicate which fund(s) you'd like your contribution allocated to.

Daily Reflections

For July and August, we are going to continue these daily spots, and try some experiments. Please offer feedback, let us know what you like, and what is not so helpful, give us your ideas what you would like to see, what your faith questions are, and how the church helps you be a better human being.

Email PrairieSpiritUC@shaw.ca.

Our Mission Statement says one of the ways we live our mission is by telling the stories of our faith to all generations. On Mondays, we will ask what that means. What are the stories that guided the lives of our previous congregations? What is the story we are creating anew together? Some of the stories come from the Bible; some of them come from our families. Let's have a conversation together.

On Wednesdays, the focus will be on personal faith and spirituality. Rev. Paul DuVal will share a theme from Rev. Richard Rohr, who has much wisdom to share about prayer and the inner journey.

On Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, Candace Maxymowich, our administrator, will share some thoughts of her own.

View our Daily Reflections on our website: <https://prairiespirituc.org/category/daily-reflections/>

Announcements (cont.)

Share Your News

If you have an announcement or life celebration you'd like shared in our Weekly Update, let us know. Email PrairieSpiritUC@shaw.ca or call 204-832-1000. To leave a voice message, please press 1. Please note that we would like all submissions by Wednesday each week.

Prairie Spirit United Church

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Office Hours: Tuesday - Friday • 9 am - 2 pm

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