

**Applewood United Church
An Affirming Community
Hybrid Worship for June 18, 2023
Indigenous Day of Prayer**

Today's service was created for the United Church and for the Indigenous Day of Prayer by Debbie Hubbard, who is a member of Central Okanagan United Church and Wild Church Okanagan in Kelowna, BC. She is a lifelong member of the United Church and currently serves on the Indigenous Justice Advisory Group.

Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

Centering Music: "You Are Holy" MV 45

You are holy, you show us the way,
you are holy, you show us the way.
You show us, you show us, you show us the way,
you show us, you show us, you show us the way.

Call to Worship:

One: In the presence of Creator, we gather this day in a spirit of gratitude.

**All: Gratitude for all the gifts of Creation—
the air, the water, the land, the change of seasons as we move into summer.**

One: Gratitude for all the creatures that walk, swim, fly, and crawl on this earth.

All: We gather seeking wisdom to help us live a generous and compassionate life.

One: We gather seeking wisdom to help us live together with respect and humility.

All: We gather seeking hearts and minds that are open to new possibilities and new beginnings.

Opening Prayer: *A Prayer in Four Directions*

One: Creator,
We give thanks for the knowledge you give to us
through all the traditions of the world.
Help us to honour the gifts that each tradition offers.

All: We seek to take the path of love.

One: We give thanks for the east,
for the sun that rises to begin each new day.
We give thanks for new life, for youth.
We give thanks for new learning and new experiences.

All: We seek to take the path of love.

One: We give thanks for the south,
for the growth of the summertime in our lives,
for the teachings to be kind to ourselves and others.
Help us, who are elders, love and respect children and youth.
Help us to care for the elderly and those who cannot care for themselves.

All: We seek to take the path of love.

One: We give thanks for the west,
for the understanding of how to care for the earth.
Creator, help us to use this understanding
to bring joy and new life to the world.

All: We seek to take the path of love.

One: We give thanks for the north.
Help us to receive gifts of wisdom and new perspectives from all peoples.
Help us to grow our roots of compassion deeper as we journey.

All: Together we will take the path of love for ourselves and for each other. Amen.

Opening Hymn: "God of the Sparrow" VU 229

God of the sparrow God of the whale
God of the swirling stars
How does the creature say Awe
How does the creature say Praise

God of the earthquake God of the storm
God of the trumpet blast
How does the creature cry Woe
How does the creature cry Save

God of the rainbow God of the cross
God of the empty grave
How does the creature say Grace
How does the creature say Thanks

God of the hungry God of the sick
God of the prodigal

How does the creature say Care
How does the creature say Life

God of the neighbour God of the foe
God of the pruning hook
How does the creature say Love
How does the creature say Peace

God of the ages God near at hand
God of the loving heart
How do your children say Joy
How do your children say Home

Prayer for Reflection and Revelation: Mi'kmaw Prayer of the Seven Sacred Teachings
by Helen Sylliboy

Creator, Thank you for this day you have given us.
Thank you for allowing us to gather here today and we ask you to enter where we are, so that your teachings will work in us.
We ask for wisdom, so that we will know what is good in this world.
We ask for love, so we can spread your love everywhere.
We ask for respect, so that we will know that everyone comes from one place....from you
We ask for bravery, so that we will not be afraid to do your work here.
We ask for honesty, so that no one will lie or harm anyone of us.
We ask for humility, so that no one will be superior to another.
And lord, we ask for truth, so that we will see you in the future, on the last day with clean hearts and spirits. Amen.

Sung Response: "There's A River of Life" MV 160
There's a river of life that's flowing from God's throne,
a river of life that's flowing from God's throne.
Won't you come on in and see?
This river will set you free!
Way yah hey yah, way yah hey yah, high yah way.

Scripture Readings:

1 Kings 3:5–12

At Gibeon God appeared in a dream to the ruler during in the night, saying
"Ask what you would like me to give you."
Solomon replied, "You have shown great kindness to your servant, David,
who was faithful, righteous, and obedient to you. And you have generously
maintained this constant love toward us and now you have appointed a
successor to sit on the judgment seat this very day. Now, YHWH my God,

you have continued this kindness to David's successor to sit on the judgment seat this very day. Here I am in the midst of your chosen people, a people so numerous they cannot be counted. Give me, your servant, a discerning heart, so that I may distinguish good from evil govern your people with wisdom."

YHWH was very pleased that Solomon requested what he said. So God said to Solomon, "Because this is what you asked for and not for a long life, or for wealth, or for the lives of your foes, but asked for discernment in administering justice, I grant your request. And I give you a heart so wise and so understanding that there has been no one like you before your time, nor will there be after your time.

Matthew 19:16–22

Someone came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good must I do to possess eternal life?"

Jesus replied, "Why do you ask me about what is good?

There is only One who is good. But if you wish to enter into Life, keep the commandments."

"Which ones?" the youth asked.

Jesus replied, "No killing. No committing adultery. No stealing. No bearing false witness. Honour your parents. Love your neighbour as yourself."

The youth said to Jesus, "I have kept all these. What more do I need to do?"

Jesus said, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell what you own and give the money to poor people, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me" Upon hearing this the youth, whose possessions were many, went away sadly.

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Choir: "Love"

Wisdom Words: Learning Ojibway <https://wagamesewriter.wordpress.com/2012/04/13/learning-ojibway/>

Richard Wagamese Selected: What Comes from Spirit (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2022)

Reflection: The Possibility of New Beginnings *by Debbie Hubbard*

Hymn: "Like a Healing Stream" MV 144

Like a healing stream in the barren desert,
Spirit water bringing life to dusty earth,
God is trickling through our lives as in a dream unfolding,
promising revival and rebirth... like a healing stream.

Like a gentle rain on a thirsty garden,
Spirit water come to nourish tiny seed,
God is bubbling through the soil to coax a new creation,
yearning for an end to want and need... like a gentle rain.

Like a river strong with a restless current,
Spirit water rushing on to distant shore,
God is carving out a channel in a new direction,
calling for an end to hate and war...like a river strong.

Like a mighty sea reaching far horizons,
Spirit water with a love both deep and wide,
God is working in our hearts to shape a new tomorrow:
God will always challenge and provide!

Like a mighty sea, like a river strong,
like a gentle rain, like a healing stream.

Introduction to the Offering

Gift of Music "You've Searched Me God, You Know Me"

Hymn of Dedication: "Know that God is Good" MV 104

Know that God is good, know that God is good,
know that God is good, God is good, God is good.

Offering Prayer:

All: It is our privilege, **Creating One**, to share from our individual bounties.
On these plates and in these bodies are our gifts to the world:
money, commitment, and thanksgiving.
We pray over these offerings in the name of the One who shared his all.
Amen.

Prayers of the People

Creator....

Quiet our hearts. Still our busy minds that we may know your voice.

This morning we give thanks for the beginning of summer—warmer weather, time for a break from our regular routines, the sounds of children playing outside, the abundance of nature and all that it offers to refresh our spirits.

We give thanks for the presence of the members of the Indigenous Church. We are grateful to them for the courage they have modelled in asking for what they need to continue their journeys of healing and rediscovery.

We remember as well those individuals and families here at Applewood United Church and outside this community who are in need of healing and support. May their spirits be lifted. We name them now—aloud or in the silence of our hearts.

We offer now, O God, the deep yearnings of our hearts...those places and situations where we need your guidance and your presence in our own lives and in the lives of the larger community...

Spirit of our yesterdays, our todays, and our tomorrows,
you make all things new.

Transform us during this time of transition—may each of us be wise as we consider the ask of the Indigenous Church,
an ask that seeks to build a new relationship—a relationship based on mutual respect, shared hope, and better understanding. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer (sung) VU 959

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 glory are yours,
now and forever.

Closing Hymn: "Go, Make a Diff'rence" MV 209

Go make a diff'rence.
We can make a diff'rence.
Go make a diff'rence in the world.
Go make a diff'rence.
We can make a diff'rence.
Go make a diff'rence in the world.

We are the salt of the earth,
called to let the people see
the love of God in you and me.
We are the light of the world,
not to be hidden but be seen.
Go make a diff' rence in the world.

Go make a diff' rence.
We can make a diff' rence.
Go make a diff' rence in the world.
Go make a diff' rence.
We can make a diff' rence.
Go make a diff' rence in the world.

We are the hands of Christ
reaching out to those in need,
the face of God for all to see.
We are the spirit of hope;
we are the voice of peace.
Go make a diff' rence in the world.

Go make a diff' rence.
We can make a diff' rence.
Go make a diff' rence in the world.
Go make a diff' rence.
We can make a diff' rence.
Go make a diff' rence in the world.

So let your love shine on,
let it shine for all to see.
Go make a diff' rence in the world.
And the spirit of Christ
will be with us as we go.
Go make a diff' rence in the world.

Go make a diff' rence.
We can make a diff' rence.
Go make a diff' rence in the world.
Go make a diff' rence.
We can make a diff' rence.
Go make a diff' rence in the world.

Shared Commissioning /Blessing

One: Wherever we journey this week let us be a message of justice and love

**All: Let us listen to the voices of others—
especially those who are new to our table and spaces**

Two: Let us encourage others with patience.

All: Let us live our life joyfully.

One: And as we leave this time and place remember that we are called to bring justice, compassion and love to the world.

**All: In this task we are not alone.
Amen**

Sung Amen VU431

Reflection: The Possibility of New Beginnings

I imagine that most of us have experienced new beginnings in our lives, whether it is a new job, a new relationship, a new home, a new neighbour.

These new beginnings can be filled with joy and excitement. However, they are frequently accompanied by feelings of uncertainty and anxiety.

And so it is with the readings this morning....

Wisdom, discernment, and unsettling are all themes that these readings explore. What insights might they offer us at this time?

Our gospel reading from Matthew is about a young man who comes to Jesus seeking the answer to how he might have “a perfect” and “eternal” life. Jesus’ instructions are pretty explicit to him: “Go and sell your possessions, give your money to those who are poor, and then come follow me.” In other words, to build a new life, this young man must give up what is familiar and comforting to him. I suspect that Jesus’s answer “unsettles” him. This new path means letting go of the young man’s current identity and wealth. The reading tells us that he walked away from Jesus grieving, for he had many possessions. It appeared that for him the lure of a new life was not enough compensation for the sacrifices he would have to make.

And then there is Solomon in our reading from 1 Kings. At a very young age, he finds himself in a leadership role as the new king. He is quite anxious about how to follow in the footsteps of his famous father, King David. One night, he has a dream where he meets up with God and asks God for wisdom and understanding. He is seeking wisdom because he wants to be a good leader and make the best possible decisions for the people that he is leading.

Perhaps Solomon and the young man might serve as metaphors for us given this time in our own history and story as The United Church of Canada. We are indeed in some “unsettling” and “interesting” times that involve letting go and opening up to new possibilities.

In 2022, the 44th General Council of the United Church gathered. At that gathering, the National Indigenous Council proposed that the church identify and remove any structural barriers that would prevent developing and sustaining an autonomous National Indigenous Organization within The United Church of Canada.

When there is a requested change in church structure that alters the Basis of Union of *The Manual*, a remit is required. The 44th General Council authorized the remit to test the will of the church on this

requested change. The remit requires a vote by every regional council and each pastoral charge's governing body.

If the remit is passed it will

- enable the Indigenous Church to determine its place and structure within the United Church, and
- enable the creation of an autonomous National Indigenous Organization within The United Church of Canada

Indigenous Peoples' rights to their own spiritual identities and to self-determination would be acknowledged by the passing of the remit and would be consistent with the [Calls to the Church](#) and the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#).

Like the young man in the story from Matthew, all sorts of new possibilities and opportunities are in front of us, accompanied as well by uncertainty and questions.

Some of the questions that might be arising at this time:

- Are we willing to sacrifice what is familiar to us for the possibility of a new story?
- Are we prepared to create space and time for the Indigenous Church to discern their own story?
- Are we willing to dismantle the structure of the church as we know it and await the birthing of something new?
- What will that new structure look like?

Unlike the rich young man, we don't have Jesus telling us what our options are. The path to our new beginning is less obvious and a little less certain. Will we accept this invitation to a new life, or will we be like the young man and walk away?

Like Solomon, we need to seek wisdom and understanding. Maybe this is a *kairos* moment for us—a time for us to contemplate and invite renewal not only for the Indigenous Church but for us as well. Maybe this is the time for us to trust that there will be uncertainty, but collectively we believe we can forge a new future. We proclaim to be a church with a commitment to seek justice. Perhaps this is one more invitation to live into that commitment.

So, today on this Indigenous Day of Prayer, may we be unlike that wealthy young man. May we respond more like Solomon. May we be wise and understanding people of faith with hearts open to the uncertainty of change. Whatever unfolds in the future, we welcome the promise of new possibilities and trust that we will find our way.

Amen.

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