

Morning Worship

Gathering Song: VU #34 Come Now, O God of Peace

Call to worship [*voices from outside circle*]:

[*Readers walk to centre and pour their 'tears' into one of the four bowls on the table after speaking.*]

Samaritan woman:

Can you hear my voice? I am she who came to the well at mid-day. It was too hot to be hauling water at that time of day; but I dare not go with the other women at dawn, when it was cooler. Their hostile stares and cold shoulders made it clear that I was not welcome.

I was unused to kindness, so I didn't know how to respond to him at first. But there was no judgment in him, only compassion. And for the first time, I felt that someone else was really seeing *me*. It was scary, and beautiful, and it changed my life forever.

My tears of alienation were transformed that day to tears of joy.

Ethiopian Eunuch:

Can you hear my voice? I am he who was at the centre of power, but always an outsider. Before I was old enough to have a say, I was made a eunuch and sent to serve the queen.

I know what they say about me – that I'm not 'a real man'. I pretend not to notice, but it hurts. The truth is, I do feel less than whole. Like part of me is missing and everyone can tell. Friends say I shouldn't complain, that I have it easy living at the royal court, overseeing the treasury. They don't understand what it feels like to know that no matter how high my position, I will always be looked down on by others.

I never expected Stephen to agree to baptize me. I never imagined my emptiness could be filled. My tears of shame were washed away in that muddy river water as he welcomed me into the Body of Christ.

Zipporah:

Can you hear my voice? I am Zipporah, Moses' wife, who was sent away with my sons to my father's house when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. Did he send us away to protect us? To keep us out of harm's way while he confronted first Pharaoh, and then the army of Amalek? Or was it that he was embarrassed to acknowledge us in front of his people, since we're not Hebrews?

Whatever his reasons, it has always made me feel like I'm not really one of them, you know what I mean? Sure I'm part of the community now, but I always feel like a stranger among them. Like they have all gone through this incredible experience together and I wasn't part of it. I am respected, as Moses wife, but I just don't feel really accepted.

My tears come silently, when there is no one else to see.

Refugee:

Can you hear my voice? I am a refugee. In my home land, I was persecuted for being a Christian. When the government thugs came for me in the middle of the night, I had to flee with only the clothes on my back.

I have finally been able to create a new life in a new country and a new land. Even though I lament all that I left behind, I give thanks that here I am free to practice my faith without interference.

But it is hard. Every thing is so different here. Even the rituals and songs we sing at church are unfamiliar. After three years I still feel like a stranger in my own congregation. I am so lonely. My tears keep me awake at night longing for a place that is truly home.

First Nations person:

Can you hear my voice? I am a First Nations person. I have always followed the Christian path, since my mom went to the church-run Residential School. For years I knew nothing of our traditional ways or my own Cree language. But recently I am beginning to learn. It feels like a part of my spirit that was caged has finally been set free.

My Christian faith is still very important to me. But now, when I go to church, it is like stuffing my spirit back into that cage. Everything is done by the White people's rules... in the White people's language. My minister said we can include an Aboriginal prayer on First Nations Sunday, when it is appropriate.

My tears burn with anger at the way my people continue to be treated as outsiders in our own land.

Black Canadian:

Can you hear my voice? I am a Black Canadian. My family have lived in Canada for seven generations. I have been a member of the United Church my whole life. So why do I feel like an outsider in my own church? I am so tired of folks asking me where I come from. I'm from here!

I know they're not trying to be rude; but that just makes it worse. It's a constant reminder that in their minds 'whiteness' is normal and everything else is 'other'. I wish that for just one day the tables could be turned; then I think they would understand and think twice before making assumptions.

My tears come from my frustration that this is still an issue in 2014.

[spoken from centre of circle]:ⁱ

The preacher was more than ordinarily eloquent and everyone, but everyone, was moved to tears. Well, not everyone exactly, because in the front pew, sat a gentleman looking straight in front of him, quite unaffected by the sermon. At the end of the service, someone said to him, "You heard the sermon, didn't you?"

"Of course I did," said the stone-like gentleman. "I am not deaf."

"What did you think of it?"

"I thought it so moving I could have cried."

"And why, may I ask, did you not cry?"

"Because," said the gentleman, "I do not belong to this parish."

– *silence* –

Song: MV #160 There's a River of Life

Prayer:ⁱⁱ

God, be with those who explore in the cause of understanding; whose search takes them far from what is familiar and comfortable and leads them into danger or terrifying loneliness. Let us try to understand their sometimes strange or difficult ways; their confronting or unusual language, the uncommon life of their emotions, for they have been affected and shaped and changed by their struggle at the frontiers of a wild darkness, just as we may be affected, shaped and changed by the insights they bring back to us. Bless them with strength and peace. Bless us all with openness to receive the gifts each brings. Amen.

Theme #1

Song: VU #117 Jesus Christ Is Waiting

– *Break* –

Song: VU #381 Spirit of Life

Reflection:ⁱⁱⁱ

'When it comes down to it, the wineskins must change.'

Much as I know I do the right thing,
politically correct, acceptable christian,
whenever I ask, all you say is:

'When it comes down to it, the wineskins must change.'

Of course I'm concerned.
I ponder on famine whilst munching my toast.
I muse about poverty whilst watching TV.
And every night I get on my knees and ask why you do nothing.

'When it comes down to it, the wineskins must change.'

How can you say that?
Must they do it themselves?
They need your wine now:
the refreshment of ministering care breaking over their pain, like vino across parched lips.
Lord, what is holding you back?

'When it comes down to it, the wineskins must change.'

Then I pause, as if a ghost has skipped past my vision.

What if...?

And I get down on my knees, inside and out...

Lord, I didn't think.

I thought I was moving in step: the correct words, right thoughts.

'When it comes down to it, the wineskins must change.'

Only new wineskins can refresh the thirsty.

Old wineskins burst and need renewing.

Lord, help me, I didn't realise... That old wineskin is me!

[Light oil lamp]

Embodied Prayer

Scripture: Syrophenician Woman (tableaus, w/ 4 actors, one reader)

[At end, each of the actors lights a taper from the flame and carries it up one of the aisles and places it on one of the tables behind the circle.]

Theme #2

Song: MV #138 My Love Colours Outside the Lines

Prayer: Nuer-Dinka *[4 colours of the medicine wheel are brought in and laid on table]*

Piny/Piny = earth Mac/Mac = fire Piiw/Piu = water Yiee/Alir = air

Scripture: Genesis 9:8-17 (in French) *[4 more colours are brought in]*

Song: MV #141 We Are All One People

– *silence* –

Prayer of Jesus [each in own words/language]

Theme #3

Song: VU #702 When a Poor One

Scriptures: (read from outside circle)

Deuteronomy 10:17-19

Jeremiah 17:7-8

Mark 1:4

Acts 2:44-46

[After reading, come into circle, pick up 2 coloured cloths, start circling the centre table... As the quote below is read, each leave up a different aisle and place cloths on one of the rear tables.]

Quote:^{iv}

The voice of Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche International –

I begin to discover something: that this wounded person looks at me, approaches me – all this does something to me, the wounded person calls me forth... we are brought to life by the eyes and hands of wounded people who seem to call us forth to life.

Song: MV #120 Canticle of the Turning

Closing worship

Song: MV #2 Uyai Mose

Prayer (not in English)

Scripture: Luke 1:46-55 [*the 4 bowls of water are carried up the aisles and placed on rear tables*]

Moderator's Message

Song: MV #125 When a Grain of Wheat

Words about transformation... and invitation to turn chairs around

[all turn their chairs to face outward]

Asperges from four worship centres located outside of circle

A New Creed (with actions, led by 4 people)

Closing Prayer^v

Listening to the silenced,

ceding place to those without power,

grieving the loss we did not care about,

becoming flesh for those whose flesh is torn,

we are called the body of Christ,

broken for the love of the world,

bloodied on behalf of the wounded,

poured out to make others whole.

We commit our way to the troubling peace of Christ.

Amen.

Song: MV #1 Let Us Build a House (both languages)

Commissioning^{vi}

Don't hide... don't run, but rather discover in the midst of fragmentation a new way forward...

a different kind of journey, marked by its fragility, uncertainty, and lack of definition.

And on this path, to hold these hands, that even in brokenness create a new tomorrow.

To dance at the margins, and to see the face of Christ, where hurt is real and pain a way of life.

To be touched in the eye of the storm, aware that tomorrow may not bring peace.

'Impossible,' you say; 'Let me retreat and find my rest.'

What rest, my friend, in these fragmented times?

Benediction

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain in to joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.

Sung Amen

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- i Words for final voice by Bishop B. D. Mondal of Bangladesh; taken from *Seeing Christ in Others: An Anthology for Worship, Meditation and Mission*, ed. Geoffrey Duncan; United Church Publishing House, 1998.
- ii “God be with those who explore”, by Michael Leunig of Australia; taken from *Seeing Christ in Others: An Anthology for Worship, Meditation and Mission*, ed. Geoffrey Duncan; United Church Publishing House, 1998.
- iii “New wine under the skin”, by Duncan Tuck of England; taken from *Seeing Christ in Others: An Anthology for Worship, Meditation and Mission*, ed. Geoffrey Duncan; United Church Publishing House, 1998.
- iv “Brought to Life” by Jean Vanier; taken from *Seeing Christ in Others: An Anthology for Worship, Meditation and Mission*, ed. Geoffrey Duncan; United Church Publishing House, 1998.
- v From *Hallelujah! Resources for Prayer and Praise*, World Council of Churches, 2013.
- vi “Don't Hide” by Peter Millar of Scotland; taken from *Seeing Christ in Others: An Anthology for Worship, Meditation and Mission*, ed. Geoffrey Duncan; United Church Publishing House, 1998.