



**Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge of the United Church At  
Home Worship  
Sunday August 9, 2020**



**Minister: Rev. Tammy Allan**

***Your Worship Space***

*As we continue our time apart, due to restrictions related to the pandemic, we offer to you this service of worship, for your use personally, and with your friends and family. You are welcome to share it with others. **You will also be able to find a recorded version of this service on our Facebook group, Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge.***

*Try to create a special space for your time of worship. 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. I sometimes like to sit by a window, so I can look out on the garden, and on nice days, I sit on my deck for my worship time.*

*You might want to write in 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. For interest, and further reflection, consider seeking out another church's offerings and how their message speaks to you, as well. You will find a listing of other churches within Chinook Winds Region that are offering online worship on our website [www.oldsunited.ca](http://www.oldsunited.ca) or [www.sundreunited.ca](http://www.sundreunited.ca)*

*As we worship 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 these lands and the people,  
just as those who came before us did.*

**Opening Call**

Come to this place, all who seek to be refreshed and renewed.  
Come to this place, all who seek to be nourished for the road ahead.  
Come to this place, all who seek to know God more deeply.  
Come, and know that you are not alone. God is with us, now and always. Thanks be!

**Prayer**

O God of hope, we raise our voices with thanksgiving and praise for the presence of your spirit that is at work within us and among us. In times of stormy

trouble, you offer calm, and bring a sense of peace. As we worship this day, may we know that peace. Amen.

**Hymn** VU 409 Morning Has Broken

**Reading for today** **Matthew 14: 22-33**

<sup>22</sup>Immediately he (Jesus) made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. <sup>23</sup>And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, <sup>24</sup>but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them.

<sup>25</sup>And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. <sup>26</sup>But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. <sup>27</sup>But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."



<sup>28</sup>Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." <sup>29</sup>He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup>But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" <sup>31</sup>Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" <sup>32</sup>When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. <sup>33</sup>And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

### **A Message for Today**

We have certainly had our share of wild storms lately, haven't we? Some have been storms that did instil some fear in my heart, and our dog sure wasn't happy with them, either. Chick and I used to have a small bichon-lhasa aspo dog. Loud thunder sent her cowering under our bed or into the corner of our bathroom. Not so much Belmont, the Tan-Black American Hound Dog that lives with us now. You would think she would be braver, if her size had anything to do with the matter. She doesn't cower under the bed. What she does do, however, is stand at the window and bark at the thunder and lightening. She's a hound-dog. She has a very loud bark! So if the thunder and lightening doesn't keep you on edge, the barking certainly does.

If our animals don't make us more aware of the impending storms, our cell phones do. Mine gives me alerts – heat warnings, storm warnings...and most of us also get those loud alarms that signal approaching tornados, too. All in the name of preparing us, yet sometimes I think all those warning apps to is cause us to fear.

All that said, when I am safe at home, I do like to sit on the deck and watch those dark clouds come in, and listen to the heavy rain falling on the world around me. Only a few times have I wondered if I needed a boat. And knowing the safety of the house is just steps away is really assuring.

That image of the boat that we find in today's gospel is rich in metaphorical meaning. When you are really in doubt, or afraid of something, you indeed can feel like you're sinking, like your boat is taking on water, and you no matter how fast you bail, water keeps coming in. The cause of fear or doubt can be overwhelming.

As the Season's of the Spirit Fusion curriculum says this week:

“We have allowed fear and self doubt to diminish our courage. We have allowed our past experiences of failure to define how we see the future.”  
Seasons of the Spirit for August 9, pg. 127

Have you ever experienced a time in your life when the storms seemed to outnumber the calm times? Times when you just lived each day wondering when the next shoe would drop? Or perhaps even those times when things were going SO well that you began to fear that the next turn would bring something challenging.

Where do you see God – in the fearful times, the times of chaos?

And where do you see God when things are going well? Or do you see God then? Do you look for God in the good times, or only when you're in trouble?

I know how easy it is to let me spiritual practise fall by the way side when life is going good. I fill my time with things that come my way, with work and family and friends, and spiritual practise seems too often to be the thing I let go of when life is filled with moments of smooth sailing – to continue with the boating metaphor.

But when life gets stormy, when I seem to be facing challenge after challenge – well, it's then that I find myself seeking God, praying more fervently, and...re-setting my spiritual practise schedule.

Jesus, in this passage, had been teaching and preaching with crowds of people. They were people seeking to know God, people eager to learn, people longing to hear the good news the Jesus and his disciples had to share.

Being that kind of leader that people flock to, as in this story, must have been exhausting. Each encounter, each crowd, each lesson and story, each moment of healing, would have involved energy and emotion that would have taken a lot from Jesus' own spirit. I imagine that is why he retreats up the mountain alone to pray, and to connect with his God.

In my own practise of ministry, doing that has become very important – taking Sabbath time to renew and restore myself for the journey. In so many vocations, taking care of body and soul in order to serve others well is vitally important.

Yet, it's Jesus' re-appearance to the disciples that causes fear. They've weathered a storm without him, and even though the winds have carried their boat well away from Jesus, he finds them in the morning. The story tells us the disciples think Jesus is a ghost. There could be all sorts of reasons for that – but sometimes I think we need to suspend reason and accept the mystery of the story – and look for the deeper meaning in the mystery.

Jesus' presence that morning, out on the water, caused the disciples to be afraid, and to doubt who he was – that is, until Peter asks for some sign – asks to be invited out of the boat and onto the water to be with Jesus. Remember the other doubter we read about – Thomas, in the Easter story – who needed to see and feel to believe. Jesus doesn't condemn them for their doubt – he accepts their doubt, their questions, and gives them hope, and reason to have faith.

We all come to faith, come to belief, in different ways. Peter, he needed an experience, he needed Jesus' invitation, and perhaps even the touch of his hand as Jesus reached out to keep Peter from sinking into the water.

When we have doubts or fears, when we are questioning our faith, are wonderings, our questions are acceptable – for it is in seeking understanding, in seeking moments of touching the hand of Christ that our faith can be strengthened, and our spirits renewed and restored for the journey of faith and discipleship.

In these days that we are living – may we recommit ourselves to taking time, like Jesus did, to retreat with God, to pray and renew our bodies and our souls. And may we trust that God is sailing with us, through storm and sunshine. Amen.

**Hymn**     VU 563     Jesus, You Have Come to the Lakeshore

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

We have learned that intergenerational trauma runs deep. The legacy of Indian Residential Schools continues to affect every generation as Indigenous parents struggle to educate their children in the ways of their people. In spring 2018, six youth travelled from Winnipeg to Sagkeeng First Nation in Fort Alexander,

Manitoba, to attend a Zam-mi-nan aki (“Touch the Earth”) cultural retreat at the world-renowned Turtle Lodge. At the three-day retreat, Elders taught the youth some of their traditional teachings to reconnect them with their culture. We are thankful that through our gifts we can offer opportunities for healing to young people experiencing intergenerational trauma.

Download the video here: <http://bit.ly/2sdwnTR>

### **Prayers for this day**

O God, in our hands we hold our dreams, our hopes for how we can make our living part of your dream for the world. Be with us as we struggle with the challenges we encounter each day, that through faithfulness and trust, we might be healed.

Help us to be open to the transformation that comes when we can be open to new possibilities and visions.

When the waves of fear or doubt threaten to crash our hope, surround us with your strength and compassion, we pray.

In these days of pandemic, as numbers of active cases rise, may we be wise and careful, and protective of our neighbours. May those who are working to help people heal, and those who are trying to develop a vaccine know persistent patience. May they be guided by wisdom and truth.

As people take time to vacation and enjoy travel, may they use care, and return to home and work safely.

In the wider world, we especially pray for the people of Beirut, as they recover from the massive explosion that rocked that city. May those who have lost loved ones be comforted, and may the world reach out to help in ways that bring hope and healing.

In a moment of silence, we lift up the prayers of our hearts...

Gracious and loving God, we trust that you hold our prayers close. Wrap us in love as we share 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.

**Hymn** VU 221 I am Walking a Path of Peace (sing twice)

**A Blessing for Today**

May the love that brought us into being fill us with hope.  
May the peace that passes understanding be upon us all.  
May the joy that lives where justice is be alive in each and every one of us. Amen.



*Thank you so much for using this worship resource! Feel free to share it! You will also find worship and reflective posts on our Facebook Group – Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge. Feel free to invite others to join that group.*

*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 social 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 support 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 so, call the church office for assistance with that.*

*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. Our church mailing addresses are:*

*Olds United Church 4810 50<sup>th</sup> Street, Olds AB. T4H 1E4  
and*

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