

## "New Heights"

Devotion for July 2014      "He's Gone!"

Hymn: Walk with me    VU 649

Scripture: Acts 1 7-13 & 2 1-5

Reflection:

They were alone, felt abandoned and in despair. No idea of what comes next or what to do. Does that fit a lot of churches today? Church closings are a very common occurrence. Pentecost however, set the disciples on a new path, a new journey. Perhaps that is what will happen with our current upheaval. Are you in despair over the declining attendance in your congregation, is giving up and closing the doors your solution? Or have you been smitten with tongues of fire and a wind that blows your imagination to new heights? This United Church creed, history, UCW and AOTS are worth preserving. We can see the bright light in this darkness: just get into the modern world and continue Jesus mission. It will be a different road, but one we can set our GPS on and GO.

Discussion

In what direction are you heading? Pining about yesterday or offering solution for the modern world that God still lives in?

Hymn    One more step    VU 639

Prayer.

Well God, as the song goes, "You gave me a mountain this time". I guess the question is, do we have the faith to climb it? We are certainly looking at something new. Something different and Lord we sure don't know what it is. Like the twelve we feel lost, abandoned, but we also know those tongues of fire have already landed on some, that wind will eventually affect us all and the message spread by Jesus will emerge, in a different form, but the same message of love will prevail. Thanks God, amen.

## Month of Travel

Devotion for July 2015

Hymn: VU 639 One More Step Along The Road I Go.

Scripture: Mak: 16:15 Luke 9:3

Reflection: For many folks July is the month of travel. For my wife and me, we are probably somewhere in Alaska or the Yukon. I am doing this now, in May before we leave as the Blackberry is a bit small for me to work on. I was reflecting on Jesus edic to the disciples, to take nothing and depend on the good will of those they visited. I wonder how that worked as they did have Inns for people to stay and to eat, but the disciples were to ask for freebies. Time changes as the Best Western does not seem to accept that philosophy. As for packing lite and take nothing for the road I venture to say that my wife has never read that passage. I wonder if perhaps part of the renewal of the UC could be present day disciples following that edic, to knock on doors and spread the word. Not this far from home but in our respective neighbourhoods, telling people who we are, why we exist and ask them to pop around and discuss Jesus message. Not a sermon but a two way dialogue. Or, are we afraid of what we believe?

Discussion: What do you think, was Luke 9:3 meant for us as well, and if not, should we do it anyway.

Scripture: Mathew 24:14

Hymn: VU 606 In Christ There Is No East Or West

Prayer: God, we need your help. We are thankful for all your gifts and we now ask for your continued gift of grace and faith that we may continue the Apostles journey of spreading your message of love. amen

## **“Our Time Must Be Coming”**

Devotion for July 2016

Hymn: VU493 Today I Live

Scripture: Matthew 5:4 & Romans 14:7-9

### Reflection:

We just attended two funerals. One was for a past minister who was a great AOTS supporter and the other for Betty Watson. Most of us knew her and Craig for their great musical talents at our AOTS spring roundups. Attending funerals seems to be a popular pastime once one gets to a certain age, or stage in life. Makes one think, if we dare to do so, that our time must be coming soon too. So, we wonder how much we have contributed, or not, what kind of mess we are going to leave for our kids, who will take care of those left behind. Will we be able to eavesdrop on our Celebration of Life, which seems to be the current term for funerals, wakes and otherwise end of life services. What they say, be they children, other relatives, or just friends: will it be from the heart or just platitudes that are expected of them, but not real feelings. Do we deserve real accolades or just empty words. What they think and what we think may well be completely different. Fortunately for us through the love and grace of God it is never too late; never too late to ask forgiveness if we have caused harm to someone, never too late to tell family we love them.

### Discussion.

The end can come at any age but certainly older is closer, so let's talk about, is our will complete, up to date, are there relatives—friends that we should be apologizing too, checking on their health, making sure all our assets and messes are looked after?

Hymn: VU 278 In the Quiet Curve of Evening

Prayer, Lord as we get closer to the last sunset we are so grateful for our lives, our families and all those good times you have provided for us. Please forgive all our failures, our past mistakes and make us worthy to enter your kingdom whenever you call. Amen

## Doing Things Backwards

Devotion for July 2017

Hymn: VU 216 Sing Praise To God Who Reigns Above

Scripture: Deuteronomy 8:10

Reflection:

If you do read the devotion I am sure if you realize I do things backwards. I don't use the UC lectionary. An idea pops into my head, not always the greatest, and then I spend time, way too much time, trying to match hymns and scriptures to my blurb. Well, sometimes it actually works, and sometimes not. Currently we are bombarded with Canada at 150. Not always a pleasant 150 years to remember. Our ancestors build monuments to God, and most, if still here, are pretty much empty on Sunday mornings. Those ancestors would give a lot of credit to God for their survival, and now we have pretty much abandoned their God, at least on Sunday. Were they deceived, naive, afraid, or just really thankful? I have never been, but we are all aware of the phrase, "there are no atheists in the trenches". You know, I wonder if that holds true for those in the past who, struggled for survival, who fought every day for food, to protect their families, to build a country for us, and filled the pews every Sunday.

Discussion:

Well some of us still enter those monuments on Sunday mornings. Why? To give thanks, out of tradition or habit, to honour God, or just because? Something to talk about!

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18

Hymn: VU 226 For The Beauty Of The Earth

Prayer: Lord help us to remember who we are, how we got here and who created not only us, but our beautiful earth we inhabit. We thank you for who we are, where we are, and all you give to us. In Jesus name we pray

## *“Causing ripples”*

July/August 2008

Hymn           “Come let us sing”   VU 222

Scripture       Matthew 10: 40-42   “He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man’s reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”

Prayer           Let us pray together – O God of the prophets and our God, we have struggled with you in lonely places and praised you in the company of your people. We have cried out to you and you have shown us your steadfast love. We have resisted you and you have drawn us back into the circle of Christ’s disciples. Pour out your blessing on each one of us. Hear our prayers, and renew our spirits. Amen.

Reflection      To accept, to welcome, to receive are all active verbs. It’s not just a matter of recognizing someone as Messiah, prophet, or righteous person, but what we’re willing to do about them. Are we accepting them, welcoming them, receiving them? For not to receive actively those whom Jesus sends, is to reject Him. And what about the way we engage with a child of God who loves God but is estranged from church or biblical interpretations? We do well to remember that, inside our church structures and our club environs and out in the margins where the accepted or rejected live.

There are three Godcentric ripples here: receiving a Jesus follower means receiving Jesus which means receiving God. Another trinity which includes not only Jesus’ humanity inside it, but ours too; yours and mine; personally and corporately as Jesus’ Body, making us real insiders. Does the life of our club flow through all three ripples? If there are no ripples, maybe our pond is stagnant, rather than living water.

What Jesus says next underlines our responsibility to care for each other as fellow ‘little ones’. But what exactly is ‘the cup of cold water’ needed by those around us. When our neighbour tells us, “No thank you, I don’t need any help”, can we be aware enough to know their real needs and sensitive enough for them to let us give them that ‘cup of cold water’ without infringing their pride or dignity.

Our churches do a good job of setting up some “welfare agencies” to meet some of the needs of people. Our National organization provides assistance for some blind persons, some campers, and some students. But that doesn’t let us off the hook of personal responsibility Jesus calls us to have towards those in need. Maybe we need some low key ‘cups of cold water’ by little people for little people, disciples or not? And then humbly demonstrate with these ‘cups’ to Whom we all belong, across all three ripples.

Discussion     What starting place can we find to begin some such rippling?

Closing prayer            Let us pray –For your abounding grace, we give thanks, O God. For your steadfast love, we pour out our gratitude. May our service to you and to other people provide for those who seek refuge from doubt, from oppression, from ignorance, and from calamity. Through our service in Christ’s name, we seek to grow in the Spirit of One who gave life itself for us. Amen.

Coming events            Kairos 2008 for young adults (18-30) at Five Oaks, Ontario August 25 to 29  
AOTS National Council meeting in Red Deer, Alberta September 13-14

## *“If it is to be it is up to me”*

July/August 2009

Hymn “I, the Lord of sea and sky” VU 509

Scripture Luke 10: 1-3

‘After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where He was about to go. He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.” ‘

Prayer Let us pray together – We gather to hear your call, O God of love. Speak to us in this time of fellowship and worship that we may hear your call to service and answer, “Here am I, send me.” Amen.

Reflection Do we see the work that we do each day as a part of God’s work and God’s plan? Do we see that there are many tasks that need to be undertaken to bring about justice and peace in our world? Do we name justice and peacemaking as the work of God and therefore as our work as well? God calls us to do the work that needs to be done.

In his book “If it is to be it’s up to me”, Author Thomas B. Smith tells of the powerful impact this attitude has in every area of his life. As he states in the first chapter, “An optimistic outlook on life has many advantages. It means you’re solution oriented and a possibility thinker. You look for the good. When you have a positive attitude, you’re more likely to be committed and achieve your goals and dreams.”

When we follow that message, “if it is to be, it is up to me”, as we work in our church and in our community, then we can know that we can do the work that God needs us to do.

There are many in the Bible who heard God’s call. Abraham, Samuel and Isaiah all heard it and gave the same answer, according to scripture. Isaiah heard God asking, “Whom shall I send and who will go?” They all replied, “Here I am, send me.”

In modern times, many have heard God’s call – some to be teachers, others doctors and nurses, social workers or labourers. It does not matter what the task, if it is done in a spirit of love and justice. It does not matter where the work is to be accomplished. It is our work, it is God’s work. God calls each of us to share in the coming of a world of peace and justice

Discussion What is our work at these stages in our lives?

Closing prayer Let us pray – God of call, help us to listen to your voice. Your work is our work. Our work is your work. Give us the will to follow where you lead, to reach out in love, to struggle for justice. Grant that we, with courage and daring, will stand up and be counted among your servants. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Devotion for August 2014

Hymn: VU 516 Come You Thankful people Come,

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians Vs 5:18

Reflection:

Harvest time is here. Do we take the time to reflect on what that means? What abundance it provides for some of us, but not all. The bible testaments, old and new, are full of stories about planting, gleaning and harvesting. Some stories are actually about food and some about harvesting for our faith. Some like Leviticus 23:22 are about those who have nothing but pick up our leftovers, sort of like our modern street people or many others living on the poverty line.

Discussion

You know, sometime I think we are so blessed, so well off, so lucky perhaps, that we forget to be thankful. We don't even realize the abundance we share and just take it for granted, because of who and where we are. Are we truly thankful?

Hymn VU 236 Now Tank You All Our God

Prayer. Lord, provider of all things, open our hearts, our eyes, so we may be truly grateful for all your bounty. Amen

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## Harvest time!

Devotion for August 2015

Hymn: VU 291 All things Bright and beautiful

Scripture: Proverbs 32:8-9 Isaiah 16:10

Message; Harvest time! The bible has many passages about sowing and reaping and harvesting. One thing it did not have though was Monsanto. Some of you may think they are great. I think they are a monster. Wonder how Genesis 8:22 would read if they existed then, or what Jesus would have thought of the company. Don't accept my thinking but talk to people who know, do some research and you may find that Monsanto has done more harm to agriculture and our food supply than any other entity on earth. So, we don't have those merchants to turf out of the temple but should we rail against companies like Monsanto and do whatever we can to stop those playing god with nature? What Monsanto and others have done and are doing to our food supply is as ruinous and damaging to our grandkids as any environmental concern.

Discussion: Do we have the right to change what God has created? As UC people, as AOTS members, should we get involved in any issue other than church, should we be protesting, writing letters etc., or should we just stick to spreading the word to "Love One Another", or is there really a difference?

Scripture: Mathew 1:38 Revelations 14:15

Hymn: VU 300 God Whose farm is All Creation

Prayer: God, who created all nature, our fields, streams, our crops and who created us, we thank you for all the earths goodness. May we take care of it, nourish it and never create harm to the bounty and beauty you have entrusted us with. amen

## **“God’s Creation”**

Devotion for August 2016

Hymn: VU 297: All Praise to You

Scripture: Genesis 9:22 and Leviticus 26:5

Reflection:

Drive around the back roads, and the creation is everywhere. The corn is getting higher, the grains are about ready, the third cut of hay is underway and fresh vegetables are sprouting up and overflowing the farmers markets. Yes weeds are a pain but when will we realize what we are doing by genetic modification. Through the magic and ingenuity of science man is able to change the make-up of many seeds, but what we can't do is create a seed from nothing. Just think of the wonder of a tomato seed or a kernel of corn once they are put in the earth. Harvest time is a great time to witness the wonder and bountiful world we live in and marvel at God's creation. Human life being created is about the only thing as wondrous and magical as the fruits of the fields.

Discussion;

I wonder if we ever take time to really realize, to think about the wonder that is in every small seed. Let's talk about this miracle.

Hymn VU 227: For the Fruit of All Creation

Prayer;

For the food, the farmers, all those who provide our daily nourishment we are thankful lord, but most of all thankful for the One who created the seed, the soil, sun and the rain to make seeds turn into the miracles they become. Amen

## Major Societal Shift?

Devotion for August 2017

Hymn: VU 361 Small Things Count

Scripture: Deuteronomy 15:11 and Hebrews 13:16

Reflection:

A few days ago I met with our minister Julie. My concern is what I call a major societal shift that has been brewing for some time now. I suggested, come fall, we convene a group composed of all ages and ask questions to find out why. We are all aware church attendance is in the cellar along with AOTS and UCW. But do you notice every service club from Masons to Kinsmen and Lions having great problems recruiting members as well. Beavers, Brownies, Scouts all share the same concerns. Some minor sports seem to be the only groups able to attract new recruits. As an aside and a major shift for teenage boys most are no longer even interested in classic/ antique cars. Well, so what! Do you realize that church related groups are the most generous givers of both time and money to help the poor and support their communities. Check out the national stats on volunteering and donations. If they notice or care I have seen no word from any government agency. When the crunch comes in the next couple years, not a decade but very soon, who will pick up the slack? I am talking about feeding and housing the poor, school breakfast programs, sending kids to camp, sponsoring refugees. Without church groups and service clubs none of the above will get looked after in the same way. If the government does wake up and notice, and take over, you can be sure it will not be volunteers. I can see Canada as a large socialist country, strong unions and high, very high taxes.

Discussion:

Some just shrug and say, “we survived from the horse and buggy and barn dance to cars, internet etc. We will be Ok”. So what do you think? I suggest every club talk about the above and make some suggestions before the crunch really hits!

Scripture: Galatians 6:2

Hymn: VU 372 Though I may Speak

Prayer: Lord, in some ways we are turning into a me society, no longer willing to follow the path of our fathers and mother. We ask you guidance lord to point us in the right direction, to continue to look after our neighbours and all those less fortunate. This we ask in Jesus name. Amen