**Covenant**

***The United Church of Canada***

a safe place for all people to worship

Minister: Laura Hutchison

**COVENANT UNITED CHURCH**

**SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 2024**

**SEASON OF EASTER - SECOND SUNDAY**

**BRIGHT SUNDAY – LAUGHTER SUNDAY**

**Also known as Holy Hilarity Sunday**

**(I was tempted to say, “Holy hilarity, Batman”)**

**PRELUDE**

**LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE –**

The light of Christ shines anywhere and everywhere. *(light the candle)*

**We welcome the light.**

**MEMORIAL CANDLE** - *(in silence a candle is lit)*

**EASTER INTROIT –** VU# 958 Helle, Halle, Halle! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFQQS6CRh3E>

Halle, halle, hallelujah!

Halle, halle, hallelujah! (Hallelujah!)

Halle, halle, hallelujah!

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

**WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Welcome to Covenant United Church …

 A special thank you to our coffee hour volunteers each month! Coffee this morning is hosted by Julie Karls & Evelyn Glaizer. May will be coffee & Sundae Sunday, hosted by Rob & Joy Galloway. June is our Sunday School Promotion & Wrap-up hosted by Veronica Renken & Heather Laverdiere. We are looking for volunteers to host the coffee hour. If you are willing to help, please contact Heather.

 Office hours are Wednesday from 9:00 – 3:30.

WOW (Women on Wednesdays) will be meeting on April 17th at 11:45 am at the Mac. Please call the office or let Heather or Veronica know if you plan on attending so we can plan accordingly.

 Prayer Shawl will be on April 18th from 1:00 until 3:00. All are welcome.

AGM Change of Date - Unfortunately because there was going to be some key people missing if we had the AGM on April 28th,  it was necessary to go back to scheduling it on the 21st.  The Porcupine Music Festival will be coming in on the 21st after 1:00 (festival starts at 1:30 that day) so I think we will be out of there before that time.  Sorry for any confusion. Details to follow.

(the ringing of the chime)

**ACKNOWLEDGING THE LAND AND PEOPLE –**

Today we acknowledge that we are meeting on Land that is part of the Canadian Shield, and is fed by the waters of the Arctic Watershed. For many generations it has been the traditional home of people. Our on-going relationship with the land and with our neighbours, both Indigenous and Others will determine life for future generations on this planet.

**We hope that reminding ourselves of this will help us to be aware, when there are things we can do that are faithful, and helpful. We pray for the humility that is needed as we live into an ever-deepening respect for the Creator, the land, our treaty partners and all living beings.**

**TIME WITH GOD’S CHILDREN –** The Season of Easter, and Holy Hilarity

**HYMN –** Take Time to Be Funny – Tune VU #672 Take Time to Be Holy *-- authorship unknown*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4GAdx8NJoE>

Take time to be funny, rejoice in the Lord

Let laughter explode and have fun with God’s Word

For laughter is healing, gives strength to the weak

God loves to see smiles, for they lift up the meek.

Take time to be silly, it’s good for the soul

Too many are sombre, grabbing control.

Let go and let God’s love wash over your soul

Heavenly transcendence can be your life’s goal.

Old Sarah and Abram – a child they lacked

But God’s angels promised and she birthed Issac

In Hebrew that’s “laughter”, go check in you want

Genesis Seven-teen is where it is found.

For humour is holy, it sanctifies life,

Replenishes hope and oft softens advice

It undercuts sorrow, deflates haughty pride

So smile and hang on, and rejoice in life’s ride.

**CALL TO WORSHIP –** *(by Gord Dunbar)*

Arise! Shine! Embrace laughter’s light!

**Even in the midst of challenge, we should laugh?**

Chrome, and embrace God’s gift of healing –

Mirth within the shadows of life.

**Surely you jest, for life demands our sombre best.**

Come, to chuckle at the overwhelming irony of living.

**To laugh? – in this place of holiness and reverence?**

To laugh

And in the laughter to share,

And in the sharing, to care,

And in the caring to love one another.

**Glory to God through all our relations!**

**Glory to God as we meet our call within Christ’s mission**

**PRAYERS OF APPROACH**

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Thomas said, “Unless I see the scars of the nails in his hands and put my finger on those scars and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

**Be with us in our doubting as well as in our believing, Loving God**

When we engage with science for the truth it has to offer,

**be with us, Loving God.**

When we search for the answers to our deepest questions,

**be with us, Loving God.**

In the midst of argument and discussion,

**be with us, Loving God.**

When we yearn for your quiet voice in the hubbub,

**be with us, Loving God.**

*(a time of silent reflection and prayer)*

**WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

The days are lengthening, the temperatures are warming, and the rhythm of nature is being transformed. In a similar way, the promise of Easter has burst into our midst, and we know that God has created a place of renewal for each one of us. Rejoice in the transformative power of God and be thankful.

**CENTERING**

**MINUTE FOR MISSION**

**United Church Camps – but Make Them Year-Round!**

An ever-changing backdrop for outdoor activities and adventures

On a windy weekday morning in February, you might expect a camp to be quiet, anxiously awaiting the hustle and bustle that summertime will bring. But on the escarpment in Lincoln, ON, Cave Springs Camp is anything but quiet.

A Nature School for youth operates daily on the lower floor of the new Conference Centre. Staff take bookings for weddings, corporate events, and birthdays, and in the afternoon a youth group will arrive to enjoy the year-round facilities.

Cave Springs Camp hasn’t always been this way. Not so long ago, programming would only run in the summertime, with some bookings into the fall if weather permitted.

Program Director Lance Wright enthusiastically expresses his deep gratitude for the people who have made year-round facilities and programs possible. Looking outside on a February weekday, Lance can see children at the Nature School experimenting with the wind instead of hiding from it indoors on a phone or computer. Lance’s passion for creating lifelong memories and inspiring faith and self-confidence shines through his work to build a caring and dynamic community atmosphere.

From the vibrant colours of spring to the warm sunshine of summer, the crisp air of fall, and the magical snow-covered landscapes of winter, Cave Springs Camp provides an ever-changing backdrop for people of all ages to appreciate outdoor activities and adventures.

Your generosity through Mission and Service is helping children, teens, and adults to reconnect with nature at any time of the year. Thank you.

*Stay tuned for a video from Cave Springs Camp coming later in 2024!*

**SCRIPTURE READINGS**

**Psalm 133**  VU p.856 No video is available,

*sing in unison, or read responsively*

**Behold how pleasant, how good it is!**

**Behold how pleasant, how good it is!**

How pleasant and harmonious

when God’s people are together:

fragrant as precious oil

when running fresh on Aaron’s beard. **(R)**

How pleasant and harmonious

when God’s people are together:

fresh like the morning dew

that falls on Zion’s holy hill. **(R)**

How pleasant and harmonious

when God’s people are together:

there is where God bestows

the blessing, life for evermore. **(R)**

**Acts 4: 32-35** – The Message

**John 20: 19-31** – The Message – To Believe

**HYMN** – An Easter Carol – Joy to the World <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5v9meFiSMwo>

*Words written by Paul Lintern. ©2004 by Paul Lintern. Used with permission.*

Joy to the World, the Lord’s alive,

Awake, rejoice and sing! It’s just as He had said,

He’s risen from the dead.

Salvation now He brings, Salvation now He brings,

Salvation, salvation now He brings,

Joy to the World, the empty tomb,

Proclaims a victory. Of light compelling,

A great dispelling

Of darkness in the world, Of darkness in the world,

Of darkness, of darkness in the world.

Joy to the World, Our Savior reigns,

Let Heaven and earth proclaim

The glories of His righteousness,

And wonders of His love, And wonders of His love,

And wonders, wonders of His love.

**REFLECTING**

**HYMN –** Response: MV# 150 Spirit God, Be Our Breath

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZzWcqG3Yac>

Spirit God: be our breath, be our song.

Blow through us, bringing strength to move on.

Our world seems inward, defensive, withdrawn….

Spirit God, be our song.

Patient God: soothe our pride, calm our fear.

Comfort us. When we know you are near

we grow more certain, our vision is clear.

Patient God, calm our fear.

Loving God: be our voice, be our prayer.

Reaching out, joining hands as we share,

we seek your guidance through friendship and care.

Loving God, be our prayer.

Spirit God: be our breath, be our song.

Blow through us, bringing strength to move on.

Through change, through challenge, we’ll greet the new dawn…

Spirit God, be our song.

**OFFERING**

**INVITATION**

**DOXOLOGY –** VU #538 For the Gift of Creation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIdQaBbIfEE>

For the gift of creation, the gift of your love,

and the gift of the Spirit by which we live,

we thank you and give you the fruit of our hands.

May your grace be proclaimed by the gifts that we give.

**PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION –**

God of new and resurrection life!

**We give thanks for the abundance that allows us to share our time, and talents, and resources with others here, and around the world through this community of faith, the work of our Mission and Service Partners. Amen!**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

**HYMN --** VU#624 Give To Us Laughter

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HrujZJ-K0dM>

Give to us laughter, O Source of our life.

Laughter can banish so much of our strife.

Laughter and love give us wholeness and health.

Laughter and love are the coin of true wealth.

Give to laughter as sign of deep joy;

let us in laughing find Christian employ,

joining with stars and with bright northern lights,

laughing and praising and sharing delights.

Why do we worry that we will lose face?

Why act like king for the whole human race?

Often in family, and often with friend,

laughing at pride causes anguish to end.

Even in sorrow and hours of grief,

laughter with years brings most healing relief.

God, give us laughter, and God, give us peace,

joys of your presence among us increase.

**COMMISSIONING & BLESSING –** *(read responsively)*

(with thanks to David Sparks, Summerland, B.C.)

On the way of discovery,

**may we find new joy in old friends.**

On the way of discovery,

**may we find new joy in new friends.**

On the way of discovery,

**may we find new understanding in our confusing places.**

On the way of discovery,

**may we find new inspiration in new songs.**

On the way of discovery,

**may we find new perspective in our old learnings.**

On the way of discovery,

**may we find new ways to change our suffering world.**

In all the tough and good places of our day,

**God will go with us and bless us on the path of discovery.**

**SENDING SONG** – Let us sing a blessing to one another –

MV # 218 – May the Love of the Lord

May the love of the Lord rest upon your soul.

May God’s love dwell in you, throughout every day.

May God’s countenance shine upon you

and be gracious to you.

May God’s Spirit be upon you as you leave this place.

**EXTINGUISH THE CHRIST CANDLE**

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