

Order of Service for May 10, 2020

~Gathering & Welcome

~Introductions

~Lighting Christ Candle

~Call to Worship

Jane -We've come to worship God,

**People: who loved us before we were yet born,
who knows us even better than we know ourselves.**

Kelly: God's presence never leaves us,

People: God's love for us never ceases.

Jane: Come, let us worship the Lord, together!

Introit: Mother and God Voices United #280

**Mother and God, to you we sing:
wide is your womb, warm is your wing.
In you we live, move and are fed
sweet, flowing milk, life giving bread.
Mother and God, to you we bring
All broken hearts, all broken wings.**

~Opening Prayer:

Voice 1: Holy God,

All: Mother and Father of us all,

Voice 2: We give you thanks for our families;

All: For mothers and stepmothers and foster mothers;

Voice 1: For grandmothers and aunts and godmothers;

All: For teachers and leaders and neighbours;

Voice 2: For all those who have been like mothers to us.

**All: We thank you for their love and care, their strength and courage,
their guidance and wisdom.**

Voice 1: We ask that you continue to bless the women in our midst, and all those who have imparted their grace and understanding to us.

All: May we know you, O God, in the ways you have mothered us.

Voice 2: Just as Jesus wanted to gather the people of Jerusalem – the way a mother hen gathers her chicks – so too we know that you long to gather us up.

All: Guide us back when we forget the way; call us with your voice of love, O God.

Voice 1: And remind us of your expectations:

All: That we will welcome the stranger, stand up to injustice, and bind up the broken hearted.

Voice 2: And now we pray as Mary's Son taught us, saying:

All: 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.

And 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.

~A Unison Reading from *A Song of Faith*, UCC, 2006

6.1 Divine creation does not cease

**until all things have found wholeness, union, and integration
with the common ground of all being.**

As children of the Timeless One,

**our time-bound lives will find completion
in the all-embracing Creator.**

In the meantime, we embrace the present,

embodying hope, loving our enemies,

caring for the earth,

choosing life.

Scripture Reading: 1Corinthians 13:4-7

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

Hymn: God of the Bible, MV #28 verses 2 and God in our struggles,

God in our hunger,

Suffering with us, taking our part,

Still you empower us, mothering Spirit,

Feeding, sustaining, from your own heart.

Refrain:

**Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.
Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.**

**Those without status, those who are nothing,
You have made royal, gifted with rights,
Chosen as partners, midwives of justice,
Birthing new systems, lighting new lights.**

Refrain:

~Reflection by Jane: *Two Strong Women*

What a strange Mother's Day!

Thank goodness for two household bubbles, which lets us gather with a few of our family or friends, but for many, that just serves to accentuate who we cannot be with...

Thank goodness for the internet, that is the next best thing to being there!

We are grateful for the internet, that lets us be 'with' you in worship, right now.

That scripture passage I read, from 1 Corinthians 13, we most often hear at weddings.

But that description of the kinds of behaviours that constitute love, could just as readily apply to parenting. Especially in these days of increased time spent together at home... that love needs to be all of those things, from all of us. "Patient, kind, not easily angered, not proud, always protects, always endures...."

Very strong language indeed... for strong character is required, to love in the ways that are true and life-giving.

Two strong women came to my mind, that I would like to lift up today. Two strong mothers.

The first is a bald eagle in Iowa. A Nature website has a livecam of her nest, that I like to watch from time to time.

(I suppose you know when you've been in isolation too long when you know the daily routines of three eagle chicks in Iowa).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UmclL6funN8>

One day I watched a long time, as one of the parents spent quite a while picking at the bottom of the nest, fluffing it up, picking out stuff that wasn't supposed to be there.

She reminded me of that verse in Deuteronomy 32: 11, likened the love of God to “an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them aloft.”

Another time, She beat me hands down at a game of who will blink first. As long as I watched her, she just perched there, practically motionless. Doing nothing. But completely on guard.

We think of an eagle as such a majestic creature. Yet how much of their life as a parent they spend just sitting, minding the nest. Not even blinking.

And when she did leave, and come back with breakfast, tearing off bits small enough for her babies...

it was interesting to watch the thousands of comments scrolling along the side as she fed them...

people were really angry that one of the chicks seemed to be getting more than their share of the meat...(good thing eagles can't read) ... Funny how weeks later, all the chicks seem to have grown the same amount ... and the criticisms have silenced ... parenting is often a thankless job...

As I watch her, I find myself thinking, “love is patient.... Love always protects Love always perseveres”

Like one of my favourite mother's day hymns in our hymnbook #269
“The care the eagle gives her young
safe in her lofty nest,
is like the tender love of God
for us made manifest.

As when the time to venture comes,
She stirs them out to flight,
So we are pressed to boldly try
To strive for daring height.

And if we flutter helplessly,
As fledgling eagles fall,
Beneath us lift God's mighty wings
to bear us, one and all.”

Which leads me to my second strong woman. My mum.
Two things I remember my mum saying to me, that sum up for me her life-giving love.

For a time in my life, I couldn't settle on what I wanted to do when I grew up... I kept changing direction, in school, in my job, in where I lived... I never felt any pressure from my parents to pursue any particular path. I always felt they were more concerned with my character than my career. What gave me the freedom, the permission, to keep changing direction and try on different pursuits, was my mum telling me, "Even if you are a bum, I will always love you just as much."

The other thing she told me?
"Don't settle." And I didn't.
Thanks mum.

~Scripture: Exodus 1:15–21

This is one of the old, old stories of our faith. It is set in the days of ancient Egypt:

The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah,

'When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, when you see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live.'

But the midwives feared *God*; so they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them. So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, 'Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?' The midwives said to Pharaoh, 'Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.'

God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong.

Reflection:

Last week we lost a member of our New Maryland church community, Connie Jones. She never held the role of mother, but she was a powerful supporter of many mothers, of *all* women. She was wonderful, and strong, and fiercely independent;

a loyal and trustworthy friend and hilariously funny; She was quiet, to be sure: but with the best laugh: hearty, husky and utterly infectious;

I last spoke with Connie about a week ago – it began as one of those easy, back and forth conversations about this and that. The kind of conversation you have when you don't realize it will be your last.

But then, for whatever reason we began telling (well, re-telling) one another, Alice stories. Now, Alice was Connie's mother, and she was another power house of a woman though she came in at less than 5 feet and was probably 90 pounds soaking wet. Connie loved telling Alice stories. And there were good ones. Like Alice's origin story, her birth narrative. Her full name was

Alice Louise (Plume) Jeffrey. But she wasn't named for a relative, as was traditional. She was named for the 2 women who assisted her mother in childbirth- Alice and Louise, midwives who delivered her on the farm up in Tay Falls in 1922.

"Oh, the doctor never made it in time – the farm houses were just too far apart! But we were fine: there were good strong women to help, the Midwives, who knew how to sit beside you and lend you their strength when you were ready to give up. Who could be gentle and cajoling but always ready to take action. You were in good hands with Midwives like Alice and Louise."

Or, as in today's story: Shiprah and Puah.

A new King or Pharaoh - has come to power in Egypt. And he's worried. A lot of "outsiders" - those Israelites - have taken up residence in town. They came originally because of famine in their own land. And that was fine – at first. But now they're *multiplying*!

Pharaoh won't have this. And so he sets a plan into place: he sets the Israelites to hard labour: building cities from the ground up with bricks and mortar; and all sorts of harsh field labour: the worse the task the better! In short, he enslaved the Israelites.

This way, the Pharaoh rationalized, these Israelites will be too weak to rise up and fight against us; too exhausted to plan rebellions. They will dwindle down to nothing.

Ahhh, except: the very opposite happened.

The Israelites flourished in numbers. Despite the harshness of their lives, their population grew. Pharaoh is wild. What will he do?

Plan to starve the Israelites? Ship them away?

Instead, he decides to get to the very source of the problem – and off he goes to speak to 2 midwives. That's right: midwives: those women who help women in labour, those women who bring new life into the world.

But he is NOT thinking about life...he has death on his mind. He says: "When you help the Hebrew women, give birth, if it is a girl, she shall live, but if it is a boy, kill him."

Now Pharaoh holds absolute power and walks off assuming all is in hand...

But these midwives - these courageous women- answer to a higher power than him. They live according to the Creator of life.

And so, they do ***not*** do as Pharaoh commands.

And before long he realizes that he's seeing an awful lot of little boys toddling around. Confused and furious, he returns to talk to the 2 midwives.

What is this about? he demands.

And Shiprah and Puah say: *Oh, Pharaoh, you can't imagine it, but these Hebrew women, why they aren't like Egyptian women AT ALL! They are so*

“lively” so “dynamic” that they pop out those babies before we midwives even arrive!

These two midwives, part of the enslaved class, not mothers themselves, they defied the ruler and saved a people.

It’s fascinating, isn’t it. The King was allowing all the female babies to live – not because he favoured or respected females. NO- b/c he saw females as meaningless, as no threat. Including the midwives. Well, he didn’t know who he was tangling with did he?

I think if we stop and think about it we have all had a Shiphrah – a Puah, (an Alice or a Louise) in our lives. Not necessarily at your birth, but somewhere in your life. A woman who is not our mother. But a woman who offers her time, her strength, her companionship, her humour, her courage to us. Maybe it was your CGIT leader? A teacher? Swim coach? Remember your mum’s friend? The one you could talk to...somehow it was easier...

Women who encourage goodness and flourishing, who will step in, even in the face of danger. By their very nature, by their ordinary lives, they teach us resilience. And bring us to new life.

You don’t have to look too far to realize there are Shiphrahs and Puahs everywhere: Shiphrahs and Puahs in Cambridge and in the Narrows and in Young’s Cove. In Gagetown and Minto and New Maryland and Nasonworth and Fredericton and.... everywhere. Today is a good day to tell their story. Amen.

~Song :Moon Joyce and Cathy Holtmann: *Everyday Moments* by: Connie Kalder

A thousand meals, a thousand dishes
how many Birthday Cakes?
A thousand hugs a thousand kisses
A thousand small mistakes
A thousand wiping down the tables
and pushing in the chairs
A thousand baskets barely carried heavy up the stairs
God knows how many washes and folds
and picking ups and tucking ins and colds

Chorus

Not the things that make you money
Or a household name.
Not the kind of things that get you
Ahead in the game
They are the everyday moments, the ones that scatter

But they're the ones that matter

A thousand "you can do its"

A thousand "don't do thats

A thousand take your boots off and

don't forget your hats

A thousand picking ups and dropping offs and cheering when they play

A thousand getting back from work and getting groceries on the way

God knows how many Legos and blocks

And playing catch and matching up socks

CHORUS

Bridge

All the weary times, middle of the night bleary wiping tears from your eyes

All the early morning alarms with their annoying ring

All the moments that you watch them smile and you realise

That you love them more than any song could ever sing

CHORUS

~A Prayer of Gratitude and Love

Voice 1: We come, as children all, O God, with gratitude and love, for every act of mothering given and received:

All: For being a care giver, a cook, a carpenter, a curtain hanger, a costume designer, a cosmetologist and a computer expert;

Voice 2: For mending overalls, and fences, and broken hearts.

All: For being strong enough, and wise enough to say 'no' when it was clearly not the popular choice.

Voice 1: For listening to spelling words and book reports and endless excuses; for listening for the phone to ring, the cry in the night, and the car in the driveway – for listening;

All: For cutting grass and cutting hair; Cutting out dresses and valentines – but rarely cutting corners.

Voice 2: For being present in the boardroom, the sickroom, and the classroom – and for always making room;

All: For treating each school play or concert like a Hollywood opening night;

Voice 1: For waiting: waiting for the pot to boil and the fever to break; in check out lines and emergency rooms; waiting for us to grow up and make something of ourselves, and waiting for us to call home after we left – for all the waiting;

All: For wearing a macaroni necklace as if it were a priceless jewel; and treasuring a dandelion bouquet as if it were an orchid;

Voice 2: For always remembering: first steps and first words, every birthday and anniversary, but promptly forgetting our angry words;

All: For every act of mothering given and received, for mothers still with us, and for mothers present in our hearts, for strong and caring women everywhere, we say ‘thank you’ – just as they taught us! Amen!

~Benediction:

Voice 1: Day by day, God will lead us:

Voice 2: To the places of holy encounter; the places of daring and courage.

Voice 1: Day by day, Jesus will call us:

Voice 2: To give ourselves in service; to offer ourselves in love.

Voice 1: Day by day, the Spirit shows us:

Voice 2: The people we might be; the community we might become.

Voice 1: And all God’s people said:

All: AMEN!

~Choral Blessing: from More Voices #214

May God’s sheltering wings, her gathering wings protect you.

May God’s nurturing arms, her cradling arms sustain you,

and hold you in her love,

and hold you in her love.