

**Summerland United Church
May 26th Tending the New Creation:
Re-Creating Sabbath**

Prelude

Welcome & Land Acknowledgement

Threshold

What does it mean to be a “new creation?” We all yearn for renewal — but are we willing to pursue it? How is our own personal renewal connected to “new creation” in others, in our communities, and in the world itself? “Tending” means to lean in the direction of something...to “attend” to something is to nurture it, grow it, build it, and pay... “attention!” So this is what we will do on the 8-week journey toward the New Creation Christ intends for us!

As we begin this series, we will look to what Jesus taught about keeping the Sabbath. To tend a new creation within us, we focus less on rules, and more about what gives us life and light as a way of “Sabbath-making!”

We look to, to what our own Statement of Faith – the Song of Faith – says about Sabbath and church and how coming together as a community brings us ever close to a new heaven and a new earth.

Scripture: Mark 2:23- 26, 2 Corinthians 3:5-6

Whether you take what is written in the bible as fact, myth metaphor or story, listen for the meaning they hold for you on this day.

A reading from the Book of Mark 2:23- 26 and Paul’s 2nd letter to the Corinthians 3:5-6

Mark2:23-26

One Sabbath day Jesus took a walk through the grain fields, and the disciples began to pick ears of grain as they went along. The Pharisees said to Jesus, “Look, why are they doing something on the Sabbath day that is forbidden?”

And Jesus replied, “Did you never read what David did in his time of need when he and his followers were hungry – how David went into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest and ate the loaves of offering, which only the priests are allowed to eat, and how he also gave some to those with him?”

Then Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath. That is why the Chosen one is ruler over even of the Sabbath.”

2 Corinthians 3:5-6

It is not for ourselves we preach, but Christ Jesus as Sovereign, and ourselves as your workers for Jesus sake. For God, who said, "Let light Shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts, so that we in turn might make know the glory of God shining in the face of Christ.

One: May God bless our understanding of these sacred words.

All: Thanks be to God.

Selection from the Song of Faith: *See Insert*

Anne: One of the comments I've heard from people in our community of faith is concern that by moving to St. Stephen's Church we will lose our identity. This is a valid and important concern that we are considering from several perspectives – including physical presence and identifiers – such as signage.

Along with this, I'm of the opinion that to help us maintain our identity and strengthen it, it is important that we know it. And so with that in mind, for the next few weeks, we will be reading from and reflecting on selections from the Song of Faith – our 2006 Statement of Faith. We won't hear all of it, but chosen sections that relate to our theme of Tending the New Creation. I do encourage everyone to at some point over the next few weeks read the entire Song of Faith and perhaps spend some time in prayer or contemplation with it. This is the 4th statement of Faith created for the United Church of Canada.

This statement of faith seeks to provide a verbal picture of what The United Church of Canada understands its faith to be in its current historical, political, social, and theological context at the beginning of the 21st century. It is also a means of ongoing reflection and an invitation for the church to live out its convictions in relation to the world in which we live.

This is not a statement for all time but for *our* time. In as much as the Spirit keeps faith with us, we can express our understanding of the Holy with confidence. And in as much as the Spirit is vast and wild, we recognize that our understanding of the Holy is always partial and limited. Nonetheless we have faith, and this statement collects the meaning of our song.

With the Church through the ages, we speak of God as one and triune:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We also speak of God as

Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer

God, Christ, and Spirit

Mother, Friend, and Comforter

**Source of Life, Living Word, and Bond of Love,
and in other ways that speak faithfully of the One on whom our hearts rely,
the fully shared life at the heart of the universe.**

We sing of a church seeking to continue the story of Jesus by embodying Christ's presence in the world.

We are called together by Christ as a community of broken but hopeful believers, loving what he loved, living what he taught, striving to be faithful servants of God in our time and place.

Our ancestors in faith bequeath to us experiences of their faithful living; upon their lives our lives are built.

Our living of the gospel makes us a part of this communion of saints, experiencing the fulfillment of God's reign even as we actively anticipate a new heaven and a new earth.

Reflection: Re-Creating Sabbath

In the time of Jesus, working on the Sabbath was a sacrilege to Jewish people. It remains so for many Jewish people to this day. What constitutes as work has been poured over and debated by Jewish Rabbi's and scholars for centuries. The rules and laws about what is and isn't work, can appear to be oppressive and pedantic to non-Jews and less conservative Jews alike. However, it's important to understand why – not working on the Sabbath was, and continues to be an important part of the Jewish faith.

During the roman empire and for centuries afterwards the concept of weekend or days off didn't exist. A working person worked every day of their lives, sickness and the occasional festival were the only times people had breaks from working.

For the Jewish people, to say – our God tells us to take a day off for rest – was contradictory and challenging to the roman empire. It helped them foster their own identity and also made them a healthier people because we know that taking time to rest is invaluable to our physical, mental and spiritual health.

Jesus, isn't so much challenging this element of faith by picking grains on the sabbath, but pointing out that sometimes 'working so hard at not working' can be just as hard as working itself.

Jesus, it would appear in this story is looking for the creation of a Sabbath that is more balanced and beneficial to the people, then a day where one worries over 'doing it right or wrong'.

For us, in todays society, what troubles us with Sabbath, I think is that productivity and being productive is so ingrained in us that we feel guilty when we're 'not doing something'. Rest, is synonymous with laziness and those are 2 very different things.

The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath says Jesus. Reminding us that this is our time and opportunity for rest and for connection to the Divine. In our Song of Faith *we sing of a church seeking to continue the story of Jesus, by embodying Christ's presence in the world. We are called together to love what he loved, live what he taught and strive to be faithful servants of God.*

We do an excellent job taking the social justice and being active in our communities teachings of Jesus to heart, we feel productive and connected to our faith when we do. But what about this teaching? Jesus and the disciples are picking ears of grain as the walk, the way we might idly pick wildflowers as we walk. They are not harvesting grain, rather, one imagines them strolling through sunny fields with tall stalks of grain blowing in a gentle breeze, as the walk, they pluck a few grains, marvel at creation and relish the beauty of the day. Is that not spiritual nourishment, such as we seek from Sabbath? In 2 Corinthians, we hear Paul speak of letting our light shine for the Glory of God. And honestly, unless we rest from our work, unless we take time for spiritual nourishment, our lights can become very dull, tarnished and weak.

So we are called to take a day of rest, a day to honour our spiritual needs, and our mental, emotional and physical needs as well. As we move into our summer series on Tending the New Creation, this first week of 're-creating Sabbath' is an opportunity to consider for ourselves – what do we need for our own Sabbath? What rituals can we do for ourselves weekly or daily that will give us a period of rest and rejuvenation?

While you might come up with your own ideas, here is a suggestion to get you started thinking. In the opening of The Song of Faith we hear the following – With the Church through the ages, we speak of God as one and triune:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We also speak of God as
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer
God, Christ, and Spirit
Mother, Friend, and Comforter
Source of Life, Living Word, and Bond of Love,
and in other ways that speak faithfully of the One on whom our hearts rely,
the fully shared life at the heart of the universe.

Take some time today, or during the week to sit with these names for God. Pray over them, meditate on them, repeat them to yourself as a prayer unto itself. Are there other names that come to mind for you about God? What words would you use to describe your connection to the Holy One?

If there are names mentioned in these lines that don't work for you, leave them out. If there are ones that speak deeply to you – focus on them. Praying the names of God is an ancient practice used by both our Christian and Jewish ancestors as a way of

connecting to the One on whom our hearts rely. It is, as our Song of Faith says, how *We witness to Holy Mystery that is Wholly Love.*

May it be so.