

May 21st Call and Vision
7th Sunday of Easter
Summerland United Church

Welcome

Land Acknowledgement

Threshold

Deep Spirituality. Bold Discipleship. Daring Justice.

These six words are our call as a United Church. And they go with a vision:

Called by God, as disciples of Jesus, The United Church of Canada seeks to be a bold, connected, evolving church of diverse, courageous, hope-filled communities united in deep spirituality, inspiring worship, and daring justice.

We've spent the last few weeks exploring these calls and how they guide us in worship. We've considered the biblical sources of these calls and how they reveal themselves in our daily lives.

Today, we'll hear Jesus tell his disciples to wait for God and that the power of the Holy Spirit will be given to all followers. When this happens all will be witnesses to Jesus' teaching and healing in all the world. This is the gift God gives us at Pentecost – the power of the Holy Spirit to enliven the world and turn this vision into reality.

Reading: Psalm 69: 32–35 and Acts 1:4b–14 (Inclusive Bible)

Reflection: Call and Vision

Doesn't this story feel a little like the saying "Hurry up and wait"? Jesus tells his disciples to wait, but the time is coming. The disciples respond – so this is the time your teachings will come to fruition? And Jesus says no, but also yes. And then he vanishes. And they're left kinda dumbfounded staring at the sky – waiting. But then these messengers in white (insert Angels) are all why are you waiting? Stuff is happening. So, which is it? Wait or hurry up? Hurry up or wait?

Well, it's both really, because isn't that life? And isn't that what happens when we try to plan what we need for the present and what we'll need in the future?

And this is what we're trying to do right now. We've made this decision to sell our building to bring affordable housing to Summerland, we need to find a new place for our church. There's an urgency, yet we're also waiting. We know what we need for the present and it's difficult to imagine what we might need in the future.

Last Sunday, if you were able to stay for our first Community Consultation about this transition, you would have experienced some of this. Kathy Davies walked us through some discerning questions, of which the idea of opportunity/ God's yearning for us as a community of faith was a challenge for us to get into, while – what do we need – the concrete practicalities of living our faith was much easier for us to answer – we need comfy chairs, space for fellowship, offices, a kitchen. These are easy things to list and figure out.

It's much harder to discern what our call and vision are here at Summerland United Church, but we heard it. It was there. To quote a few things that were said – we have a story to tell, we recognize that God and Jesus are at the centre of our lives and it is from this place of faith we get both our sense of belonging and desire to put that faith into action.

As we were listing the things we needed, it was fairly far down the list before someone said we need a place for worship. I think this is perhaps we take it as a bit of a given – well ya, we need worship space. We take this piece a bit for granted at times. But when it was mentioned, Kathy asked us – *why, why do we need a place for worship? Why do we gather together for worship at all?* We could do all the good things we do for the community and the world without gathering each week for worship. Community centres and service clubs do it all the time and do it well.

So what is it about worship and our need for it that matters? And we end up circling back to we have a story to tell, and we recognize that God and Jesus are at the center of our lives.

After the meeting, I had more than one person come to me and say, you know I was thinking, I meant to mention but didn't – that worship fills me up. Worship helps me go out into the week and do what needs doing. It gives me comfort, it gives me strength, it gives me support. I feel connected, I feel cared for, and I feel at peace.

Psalm 69 says, Sing to God, all the earth's realms! Sing praises to YHWH! Oh God, how awesome you are in your sanctuary! The God of Israel gives power and strength to the people. Bless be God!

Jesus tells his people they will receive the Holy Spirit, and they will receive power with that and then they'll be able to be witness to the ends of the earth. This is for us; this is the gift we're given when we attend worship.

The UCC calls are in a circle, as I mentioned last week they move from one to the other and onward, feeding into each other, and strengthening each other. Our grounding in Justice and discipleship allows spirituality to flourish and this flourishing feeds our ability to be bold disciples and enact daring justice.

It also should be no surprise that there are three calls and the symbol they chose has three lobes that meet at a point, reminiscent of the leaves on a plant, or the Celtic knot that represents – have you figured it out? Yes, the Trinity.



I commented last week that having three calls gave different ways for different people to enter into the vision. Some people are very practical-minded, others are social justice-minded and others are more spiritual in nature. And having a call and vision that speaks to a diversity of people and includes more people.

And, it invokes the trinity – Creator, Word and Spirit. I'm choosing to use those three names instead of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit very intentionally.

Creator, Word, and Spirit. Words for our God that are active and engaging and speak to our call – to be creators, to engage in the word, to allow spirit to move us.

To create daring Justice, to engage in the word to be bold disciples and to allow spirit to move us into deeper spirituality.

This pattern of hurry up and wait, shifts a little, when we think about the circle of these calls. We have to keep moving towards our goal of finding a new home, while at the same time we need to pause to listen to what God is saying to us about who we are and who we're going to be. Perhaps the invitation is to reimagine this feeling of shuttering stops and starts, into a revolving spiral of movement that picks up a current, then slows into a place of calm water, a chance for rest, before the spiral swirls onward.

As a community of faith, we have the advantage of knowing there's a place of calm water every week, when we gather together in the sanctuary for worship and fellowship. Where we can live into the stories we have to tell and recentre our daily lives towards God. And we can say – God, how awesome you are in your sanctuary. And then carry out that awesomeness into our world.

we've spent a number of weeks considering what Bold Discipleship, Daring Justice and Deep Spirituality mean for us here in Summerland and we've gotten pretty clear on who we are as a community of faith and what we want for our future. When you visit the hall, you'll see the 3 posters we've created in response to the three calls as well as notes from our community consultation. I've put out more sticky notes and pens. If there are ideas, thoughts, or notions that have come up for you please add them to the papers.

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Which informs our community's vision:

As followers of Jesus, Summerland United Church, celebrates God's presence, serves with glad and generous hearts, and shares our material and spiritual resources in order to lessen hunger, homelessness and loneliness.

May it be so, Amen