

Contemplative Worship
November 16th, 2025 - 10:30 am
23rd Sunday of Pentecost



WE GATHER TO WORSHIP

We gather to open our hearts to the presence of the Holy Spirit that binds us together as God's community.

Prelude: *Berceuse (Lullaby)* Opus 31, No.19 by Louis Vierne

Acknowledgment of Traditional Territory

Brad, Carol, and Sam Ratzlaff

As we assemble in this holy place, we recognize that for thousands of years this territory has been a sacred gathering place for many peoples of Turtle Island. We respectfully acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of several Indigenous Nations, and wish to pay special recognition to the Mississaugas of the Credit. The original nations continue to cry out for justice.

As treaty people, we commit to listen, learn and work to right the wrongs of the past and present.

Lighting of the Christ and Community Candles

We light this Christ candle,
a sign of God's eternal light shining through creation,
revealing mercy, calling us to compassion. [Candle is lit.]

We light this community candle,
honouring the Spirit within each one, kindling justice, welcoming all,
and reminding us we belong to one another. [Candle is lit.]

**Come, Holy Flame,
burn in us with courage and care,
that we may be light for the world.**

Words of Welcome

Yvonne Stewart

Welcome to this community of faith, Trinity-St. Paul's United Church, Centre for Faith, Justice and the Arts. Whether you've come with joy or sorrow, questions or convictions, know this: there is room for you here. We gather amid concrete towers and diverse peoples in this autumn season, in these troubling times, to open ourselves to the Spirit of Love which is always here when we gather as God's people. We are here to receive whispers of the Spirit from the generations of worshippers who sought to live love in their world and times.

Words of Introduction on Contemplative Practice

Gabrielle Earnshaw

Contemplative Silence is held for two minutes.

Gathering Words: *(From the Iona Community, Scotland)*

Yvonne Stewart

O God, for your love for us, warm and brooding,
which has brought us to birth and opened our eyes
to the wonder and beauty of creation,

We give you thanks.

For your love for us, compassionate and patient,
which has carried us through our pain,
wept beside us in our sin,
and waited for us in our confusion.

We give you thanks.

For your love for us, strong and challenging,
which has called us to risk for you,
asked for the best in us,
and shown us how to serve.

We give you thanks.

O God we come to celebrate
that your Holy Spirit is present deep within us,
and at the heart of all life.
Forgive us when we forget your gift of love
made known to us in Jesus,
and draw us into your presence.

Hymn: MV 7 *Gather Us In*

**Gather us in, ground us in you.
Gather us in, ground us in you.
Gather us in, gather us in,
ground us, ground us in you.**

**Rassemble-nous, tout près de toi.
Rassemble-nous, tout près de toi.
Rassemble-nous, rassemble-nous,
tout près, tout près de toi.**

Passing of the Peace

Let us pass Christ's peace that is a mystery beyond all understanding - the peace that enables us to love the ones we cherish and the ones we don't, the peace that binds us in all our variety into God's community. Peace be with you....

Anthem: *"Caritas abundat in omnia" (Loving tenderness abounds for all)* by Hildegard von Bingen

WE GROW IN FAITH

We turn to scripture to renew our hearts and minds.

Introduction to the Scriptures

Brad Ratzlaff

These scripture passages remind us that in times of upheaval, when we are most vulnerable, God moves to create newness for all of life, to treat us with equity whatever our behaviour, and to give us words and wisdom that reveal the power of God's love.

Scriptures: Isaiah 65:17–25
Psalm 98 [Voices United, p.818, Refrain 2]

R: All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

Sing to God a new song,
for God has done marvellous things.
Your right hand and your holy arm have brought victory.
You have made known your salvation,
and revealed before the nations your saving power.
You have remembered your steadfast love
and faithfulness to the house of Israel;
all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation
of our God. (R)

Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth;
break into joyous praise, sing psalms.
Sing psalms to God with the harp,
with the harp and melodious voice.
With trumpets, and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before our sovereign God. (R)

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it,
the world, and its inhabitants.
Let the rivers clap their hands,
the hills sing together for joy before God.
You come to judge the earth, O God,
to judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity. (R)

Luke 21:5–19

Herein is wisdom.

Thanks be to God.

Contemplative Silence is held for two minutes.

Invitation to Offering and Thanksgiving

Lynne Brennan

As people shaped by divine love and mercy, we are called to live generously not because God needs our gifts, but because the world does.

Let our offering be an act of your compassion.

(The offering is collected in the sanctuary. For those online, you are welcome to donate to the work of TSP with the Q R code).



Offertory Hymn: VU 713 *I See a New Heaven*

- R** **I see a new heaven.
I see a new earth
as the old one will pass away,
where the fountain of life flows
and without price goes
to all people who abide in the land.**
- 1** There, there on the banks of a river bright and free,
yielding her fruit, firm in her root,
the Tree of Life will be. **(R)**
- 2** There, there where death dies and our lives are born again,
body and soul, struggling but whole
like flowers after the rain. **(R)**
- 3** There, there where the darkness brings visions from above.
There where the night, bearing new light,
reveals the promise of love. **(R)**
- 4** There, there where we work with the love of
 healing hands.
Labour we must, true to our trust
to build a promised new land. **(R)**

Prayer of Dedication

**Holy God, we bring to you the ordinary things of our lives,
and in bringing them, we bring ourselves.
Take us and our gifts this day,
and use them to do your work in this place and in the world. Amen.**

Prayers of the People

Hye Lim Yoon

We hold in prayer:

Lois Kunkel and family, on the death of her mother, Elisabeth Kunkel
All grieving Ray Whitehead, especially his daughters Cynthia, Beth, Sara, and their families
Bradley Clements and Emma Kelly
Betty Butterworth
Greg Callaghan

Shining Waters Regional Council

Kingston Road United Church, Toronto
Downsview United Church, Toronto
Ministère protestant francophone de Toronto

The United Church of Canada

The General Council Nominations, Audit, Judicial, Manual, Theology and Inter-Church,
Inter-Faith Committees

Ecumenical Partners

We hold in our prayers the pastors and congregations of Christ Disciples Church, India; and the churches in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia.

Centering Prayer

Yvonne Stewart

“Creating a collective of people that sits in silence, intent upon being available to the divine source within ourselves and the world can change the planet.” - Cynthia Bourgeault

Contemplative silence is held for two minutes

“We have generated a collective body of quiet, calm, equanimity and compassion. We offer this collectivity into our planet at a particularly dangerous time; that reckless tempers and reactivities may be calmed; that everything backs down from the edge.” - Cynthia Bourgeault

The Prayer of Jesus (Alternative: Retranslated from Aramaic by Dr. Neil Douglas-Klotz):

**O Breathing Life,
your Name shines everywhere!
Release a space to plant your Presence here.
Imagine your possibilities now.
Embody your desire in every light and form.
Grow through us this moment’s bread and wisdom.
Untie the knots of failure binding us,
as we release the strands we hold of others’ faults.
Help us not forget our Source,
yet free us from not being in the Present.
From you arises every Vision, Power and Song
from gathering to gathering. Amen.**

WE GO TO GOD'S WORLD

We go now aware of the presence of divine Love that guides our actions in God's world.

Closing Hymn: *Ubi Caritas (Where There Is Charity)*

15 Ubi caritas



Announcements (Remain Standing)

Closing:

Yvonne Stewart

Choir and Balcony: God who weeps when we are weeping,
maker, lover, eternal presence,
we commit into your keeping
all who suffer, and all who create suffering.
We listen for your words of wisdom;
we watch for signs of your new heaven and new earth.

North Side: Brother Jesus, who emptied yourself for the sake of the world,
we open our hearts and minds to receive with joy God's vision
of a loving and equitable community for our times.
And prepare our bodies to accept the social upheaval
that comes with newness and change.

South Side: Spirit, who sustains us even as we sit
in the dust of our efforts to do God's will,
we accept the strength you offer to empower us
to act with love and compassion in all we do,
now and always.

All: **Bless us as we go from this place
to continue to live as God's people. Amen.**

Postlude: *Be Thou My Vision for Four Hands*, Irish Melody, arranged by Deborah Park & Tom Reynolds (Piano
duet: Jill McKechnie, Deborah Park)

Praying with Scripture: Lectio Divina

Isaiah 65:17-25 (*New Revised Standard Version*)

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.

But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating, for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy and its people as a delight.

I will rejoice in Jerusalem and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it or the cry of distress.

No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime, for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.

They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat, for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be offspring blessed by GOD--and their descendants as well.

Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear.

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, but the serpent--its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says GOD.

Praying with Scripture: Lectio Divina

1. **READ:** After an initial prayer for openness to God, begin by reading slowly. Stop or make note when a word or phrase or image seems to touch you. The intent is not to get to the end of the passage but to the bottom of it in God.
2. **REFLECT:** Use your cognitive capacity to reflect on the possible meaning of the word for your life, and at times for the larger community's life. Understanding may emerge over time if there is something important for you to know.
3. **PRAY:** for your heart to open to God and for your will to respond to God's call to action.
4. **CONTEMPLATE:** Move to stillness. Absorb insights in silence without active thinking.

A Word about Contemplative Prayer

“Community is first and foremost a gift of the Holy Spirit, not built upon mutual compatibility, shared affection, or common interests but upon having received the same divine breath, having been given a heart set aflame by the same divine fire, and having been embraced by the same divine love.” - Henri Nouwen

As a community, we are exploring different forms of contemplative practice. A month ago we had a Taizé service, using collective singing to deepen our communion with God. Today we are exploring other forms of contemplative practice, one of which is contemplative prayer.

Unlike verbal prayer, or prayers of intercession, contemplative prayer is wordless and practiced in silence.

Silence can be intimidating. Scary even. But for Christian contemplatives it is by intentionally sitting together in silence that we create space for connection to the Divine. Contemplative silence is not empty. It is full of wisdom when we listen in stillness.

In contemplative silence we are rooted in the body, open in the heart, quiet in the mind.

In silence we create space for the wordless, for the invisible. We learn to take our focus off our thoughts, words, ideas – even the good, humble and noble ones - and create space for what is there underneath the words.

It is in silence that we get in touch with the stirrings of our soul. We make room for the still small voice that wants to connect with us.

Contemplative silence is not an escape from life. It is a deep form of participation. It allows the soul to breathe, to respond rather than react, and to discover that prayer, like love, matures slowly through fidelity and surrender.

When we grow still, we begin to see differently. Trees, people, and moments simply are what they are—each carrying its own grace. We learn that all places are sacred, that nothing lies outside the circle of belonging. In this awareness, the present becomes our teacher, repairing the past and preparing the future.

To live this way is to trust the slow work of transformation, to rest in the truth that God has never been absent.

- (Partially adapted from November 2025 newsletter of Friends of Silence)