



Welcome to



God is Holy Mystery

**an intergenerational theological reflection project
Immanuel United Church , Winnipeg, Manitoba Spring 2021**

This project will take place during the month of May. Materials will be posted on the Immanuel United Church website. Hard copies will be available on request. Please contact the Immanuel United Church office for details. 204-669-0220

Resources for the project

- **Introductory Video: on website**
- **Background (including Introduction to faith statements in the UCC)**
- **Worksheets (4) available on the Immanuel website posted weekly on Fridays**
 1. Learning about God through Creation
 2. Learning about God through the life and teachings of Jesus
 3. Learning about God through the movement of the Spirit

Each of these worksheets includes

- Resources for reflection (Scripture, Hymns, Stories, Faith Statements, Photographs)
 - Reflection process
4. Final Worksheet: Integration of learnings.

We invite you to participate with open minds and with patience as the project unfolds!

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Background: (applies to all Worksheets)

The Faith Formation and Life Long Learning Cluster of Immanuel United Church is inviting everyone of all ages in our congregation to think about God. As we consider who we understand God to be, we need to remember that no single word or symbol or image or experience can adequately express the totality of God.



We also need to remember that we cannot make God into whomever/ whatever we want God to be. We need to be accountable to the biblical witness and conscious of the consensus reached in denominational and ecumenical councils.

The God of Christianity is revealed in scripture, in Christian tradition and through our experience, as life-giving, loving, present, forgiving, and justice seeking.

Creation teaches us that life is inherently good, that God loves diversity, that God intends that all parts of Creation be treated with care and respect.

Jesus is known as teacher, healer, prophet, leader, and friend. We learn from his life the importance of standing up for what we believe, of being persistent and courageous, of sharing so there is enough for everyone.

Spirit is expressed as irrepresible and enlivening, calling us to live our lives in relationship with God, neighbour, and community in ways that lead to love, justice, compassion and peace.



Another way of saying all this with smaller words:

We learn a lot about what God is like from the Bible. The Bible tells the story of God breathing life into the earth and all its creatures...and saying it was good and that people need to take care of the earth and the creatures.

The Bible talks about God as being loving, kind, forgiving, and fair.

The Bible has many stories about what Jesus was like as a prophet teacher, healer, and friend.

We learn about God from things we do in church. We care about one another, we listen, we celebrate communion, we baptize, and we pray and sing. We also learn about God as we take care of people, creatures, and the whole world.

Faith Statements in the United Church, an Introduction

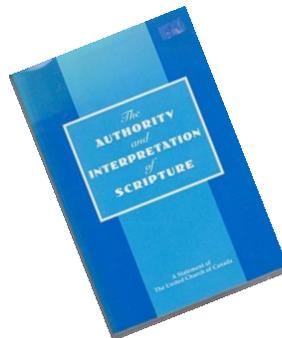
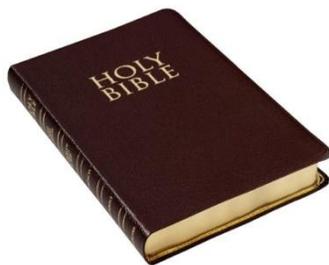
NOTE: *It is not essential that you read the introduction to Faith Statements in order to participate in the reflection process. It is included here to provide information about the nature of Faith Statements in the United Church, and how they are authorized and used.*

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“The United Church from time to time restates its faith to address changing contexts. Four statements are recognized as doctrine, subordinate to the primacy of scripture.”

(from the website of The United Church of Canada)

So, what does “recognized as doctrine, subordinate to the primacy of scripture” mean and who thought that was a good idea?



Official statements of faith (known as doctrine) in the United Church are approved by the General Council. There have been four statements since The United Church of Canada was formed in 1925. The **first** was in the form of twenty statements known as the **“Twenty Articles of Doctrine”**. These statements described what the three founding churches agreed on as the descriptions of their collective belief on the major aspects of theology. From its inception, the United Church has upheld the Bible as core authority and declared its statements of belief to be rooted in biblical teaching. It has also encouraged its members to reflect on, and discuss, their beliefs and questions and to ensure that church teaching takes seriously the challenges of the current context. Official words over the years:

“We affirm our belief in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the primary source and ultimate standard of Christian faith and life.”

“(Twenty Statements of Doctrine) as a brief summary of our common faith and **commend it to the studious attention of the members and adherents**”

“... in substance agreeable to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.”

“ Christians of each new generation are called to state it afresh in terms of the thought of their own age and with the emphasis their age needs.”

“...seeking always to be faithful to Scripture and to the testimony of the Universal Church, and always aware that no statement of ours can express the whole truth of God.”

In 1968, the General Council approved “**A New Creed**”. This was the **third** faith statement to be approved since the formation of the United Church. The church was looking for a concise statement that could be used in worship. As with the Twenty Articles of 1925 and the 1940 Statement of Faith, A New Creed, understood to be an affirmation of faith, was deemed to be faithful to Scripture. A New Creed has been used widely in The United Church of Canada and around the world. It has been altered twice by meetings of the General Council, once in 1980 and again in 1995.. The 1980 revision changed the opening lines from “Man is not alone, he lives in God’s world” to “We are not alone. We live in God’s world.” The 1995 revision, added the words “to live with respect in Creation.”

This change was made at the request of the General Council. It wanted the creed to more clearly express the United Church’s commitment to environmental justice and the commitment of Indigenous peoples to care for the earth.

The wording for the change was proposed by the Committee on Theology and Faith. “To live with respect in creation” was the response by Rev. Nelson Hart from Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (Nelson House) –and a member of the Committee on Theology and Faith, to the question “How would you say what we are trying to convey in your own language”, then “How would you say that in English?”

A Song of Faith, the **fourth** statement of faith was approved by the General Council in 2006. This statement seeks to provide a verbal picture of what The United Church of Canada understands its faith to be in the historical, political, social, and theological context of the early 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.” We will be using sections of this statement for our study.

from Song of Faith...

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 witness to Holy Mystery that is Wholly Love.