

Immanuel United Church  
June 19th, 2022

Welcome

Call to Worship:

In the holy name of God:  
Father, Mother, Creator, Life-Giver...

**we gather in this place.**

In the holy name of Jesus the Christ:  
Child, Redeemer, Teacher, Friend...

**we gather in this place.**

In the holy name of the Spirit:  
Holy One, Sustainer, Daily Guide, Justice Advocate, Wisdom...

**we gather in this place.**

In the holy name of the One who is Three  
and the Many who are One...

**we gather to celebrate new life.**

Prayer:

**Abba, Dad, Loving Father, Holy Creator,  
thanks for inviting us, welcoming us, loving us.  
We open our arms for your embrace.  
We open our hearts for your love.  
We open our lives for your presence.  
We come to laugh, to sing, to love,  
to build ever-deeper relationships with you. Amen.**

Hymn: MV 12 *Come Touch Our Hearts*

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Pride Video: Affirming Kisses (Immanuel United Church is represented here!)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mzofSN3k9G9vp3RMIL4djfwmkYpLfWUV/view?usp=sharing>

Message

Reflection: And Music Echoes Eternal Tones

**Ha Na's note for those who may hear/read the reflection on Sunday:**

*The following message was shared on Saturday, for the celebration of life of Al Matheson at Immanuel United Church.*

In his poem "On the Death of the Beloved" ("To Bless the Space Between Us", p. 170), John O'Donohue says:

"Let us not look for you only in memory,  
Where we would grow lonely without you.  
You would want us to find you in presence,  
Beside us when beauty brightens,  
When kindness glows  
And music echoes eternal tones."

In our lives, there are moments when we are moved by the grace of Nature, in which the presence of God, on earth, is revealed to us in the subtlety and mystery of being alive.

Personally, I receive such a moment while taking an evening walk on the Seine River trail. Especially when there is a beautiful sunset that dyes the sky with scarlet red or the blend of pink and blue; or in the early morning when tiny songbirds are widely awake and busy singing their chorus, only relying on their instinct and improvising an accidental heavenly harmony. In those moments, I learn why Mary Oliver said "All eternity is in the moment."

"The moment" is the magic gate to heaven on earth. The music that fills the presence and space between us, like today; "When beauty brightens," "When kindness glows," "When music echoes eternal tones."

Karen told me that when she brought forward an idea, cautiously and with loving care, about how the family might celebrate Al's life — Al, without hesitating, was able to say what he would embrace: Music, especially a Jazz service. It could be a celebration for the family and friends who might travel from near and far to gather to support one another.

When beauty brightens.

When kindness glows.

When music echoes eternal tones.

Such a moment is the magic gate to the heaven on earth. All eternity is in the moment.

When I walk on the trail, I see that some birds communicate just like humans. Or to be fair, I might need to say as well that we humans sometimes know how to communicate like birds. One day on my usual evening walk, I saw birds that were the size of my fifth finger sing like neon signs. Two birds or more took turns to shoot the “sound signs” to the other like, bbeeeep. Then the other responded and sent the same bbeep. Bbeep. Bbeep. Bbeep. They kept shooting their messages to each other, against the west-facing background of the glow of the setting sun.

That sight made me wonder... revealing a question for me in the moment:

How do we, on earth, communicate with our Creator and our beloved ones in eternity?

How do you find your magic gate to the heaven on earth?

“All eternity is in the moment.” (Mary Oliver)

Let us honour this moment as the gate to the heaven, blessing the space between us with our prayers, hymns and loving support. Let us remember Al, from our hearts, and give thanks to the Creator for the life and love which Al, great-grandfather, grandfather, pop, uncle, brother, beloved husband, shared with us. His gifts of blessings glowed with kindness, in a beautiful embrace of each sacred moment with the family; he loved to laugh with children and all; his humbleness...

When I asked the family which of his gifts they would like to honour and to choose one word to describe it, these words were immediately spoken as each face lit up like songbirds singing a melody of joy: Al was classic (a gentleman), hopeful, respectful, funny, blessed, thoughtful.

The magic moments with Al were:

When Al made you feel that you are the *world* to him.

When Al attentively listened to you... and let you know he really cared about you.

When Al, your great-grandpa, played uno with you, enjoyed desserts with you, laughed with you so hard he was almost squeaking...

Then, Karen and Suzanne dearly remembered the moment when Al blessed the space among them by saying, "I Love You," with action, from heart, not just words, at their last moment of farewell...

Circling back to another moment of eternity from my evening walk on the Seine River trail: At that moment, someone was explaining to me their thoughts on the Word of God, and at the same time, in the distance, I saw a bird swoop down flitting from one tree branch to another. The movement of the bird was so significant, it blessed me with an unforgettable, deep sense of comfort. In that instant when my eyes followed the bird's movement, I realized that sometimes God's word is spoken through action, without needing words from lips. But God's Word can be powerfully demonstrated through what we see, what we hear from the heart. Not just by seeing with eyes and hearing with ears. The blessings and the sign of God's eternal presence are demonstrated in action, in movement, from heart, from listening.

May the Creator's eternal song, the music, the gate to the heaven, echo in our lives, and bless the space between us. May Al join the joy of God's eternal presence, and now be embraced by the everlasting arms of the Creator, the peace on earth, as it is in heaven.

Hymn: VU 651 *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah* (verses 1 & 2 only)

Offering

Prayers of the People VU 376 *Spirit of the Living God*

Hymn: VU 595 We Are Pilgrims

Commissioning and Benediction:

**May the love that brought you into being fill you with hope.**

**May the peace that continues to call be upon you.**

**May the joy that lives where justice be alive in you.**