

COMMUNITIES OF FAITH WORSHIP RESOURCE  
FOR SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL INAUGURAL GATHERING 2019

Hello to Communities of Faith of Shining Waters Regional Council,

A service has been created for you to capture the experience and focus of the Inaugural Gathering of the Shining Waters Regional Council. We hope that you will use as much of the service as possible so that it echoes through the Region. The possibility of Communities of Faith all over the Region sharing in the same prayers, readings, story time and songs feels like a delightful approach to begin to weave our hearts and minds together as we move more deeply into how we will collaborate and imagine new ways of being the church together.

The pieces of this service that we particularly hope all Communities of Faith within the Region of Shining Waters will use on May 26 or soon after (including in the fall) are:

- 1) \*The theme song Awake, Arise (which you are free to use repeatedly)
- 2) \*Question of Intention
- 3) \*The Commitment To Collaborate

It may be that it will work best for you to use different pieces on different Sundays, both from this list and from within the full service. Please feel free to pick and choose what will work in your Community of Faith and to add in any traditions or practices that you use.

There will be a complete Power Point available for this service soon since most of the worship comes from the worship at the Inaugural Meeting of Shining Waters Regional Council and so is being prepared in Power Point already. It will be available no later than May 17<sup>th</sup>.

An audio recording of the theme song Awake, Arise is also intended to be available soon. The sheet music is available now.

If you have questions or wonderings please contact me at [KHilfman@United-Church.ca](mailto:KHilfman@United-Church.ca)

Blessings,  
Karen Hilfman Millson  
Minister of Cluster and Network Animation  
Shining Waters Regional Council

## “CREATING CONNECTIONS”

Creating a Sense of Connection  
as all Communities of Faith in Shining Waters  
are invited to participate in this worship  
based on worship from the Inaugural Meeting  
of Shining Waters Regional Council

### WE GATHER

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE COMMUNITY

#### WORDS OF WELCOME (*an explanation of the service*)

As we gather we will be joining our voices, reflections and experience with people from all over our new region of Shining Waters. All Communities of Faith have been invited to include at least some of this service during a time of worship, if not today than sometime soon. The theme for the Regional Council Meeting is “Creating Connections.” In our new three council governance structure of The United Church of Canada a key that has potential for positive impact is through the development of networks and clusters amongst Communities of Faith or people who are passionate about a particular topic. Considering how we can cluster and network invites us into a renewed commitment to collaborate – to consider what we can do together with other United Church people beyond our Community of Faith that we can’t do alone.

So let us worship together, joining our hearts with long-time and yet-to-become friends across our region. We begin with a call to worship.

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Let us journey together as we seek to  
express our faith in the moments of our lives.

May we bring along  
a sense of expectancy,  
a vision of high hopes,  
a glimpse of future possibility  
a vivid imagination.

**All: Let us journey together  
listening deeply**

**to God's desire for us  
to share our gifts and inner light  
illuminating pathways of  
hope and love in this world.**

One: As we venture forward  
let us leave behind a sense of certainty  
creating opportunities for  
new possibilities to emerge  
new connections to develop.

**All: Let us travel light  
in the spirit of faith and anticipation  
toward our deep longing for wholeness  
that aligns us with Jesus' vision  
of the Kingdom of God here on earth  
which emerges in our midst  
every time the power that reigns is love.**

One: Let us travel together  
as companions in faith,  
secure in the knowledge  
that we never travel alone.

HYMN: MV #1 All Are Welcome In This Place

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE LAND (*divide people into two groups*)

Group 1: Long, long ago, God created the heavens and the earth, stars and planets and galaxies.

Group 2: God created all living creatures – those in the rivers, lakes and oceans; animals and birds; God created people and urged us to live in harmony.

Group 1: This land where we gather today has been a gathering place for Indigenous people as they lived and travelled in this area for generations beyond our knowing.

Group 2: Before people arrived from across the seas, these groups lived, loved, raised children and made a living. They lived in harmony with all that Creator had made.

Group 1: The lands north of Lake Ontario are the traditional territories of many Anishinaabe, Huron, and Haudenosaunee nations:

Group 2: The Wendat, the Petun, the Seneca, the Chippewa, the Mohawk, the Mississaugas, the Pottawatomi.

Group 1: We give thanks for this land on which we meet and we recognize the traditional sojourners in this land.

Group 2: We give thanks for them and their welcome of settlers reflected in the two row wampum treaty in which we all agree to live in peace as nations living side by side.

**All: We acknowledge that our history together has come at a great cost to Indigenous people and we commit ourselves to be partners in healing and reconciliation.**

## LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

FOUR DIRECTION CANDLE (OR CANDLES): *red, black, yellow and white*

As we light this candle (these candles), we give thanks for the wisdom of the teachings of the four directions represented in the four colours woven into our United Church Crest. The colours of the four directions represent the cycle of life, the many teachings that Creator has given, and the whole scope of the human race. We recommit to living the blessings of the seven sacred teachings that create life-giving community of love, respect, courage, honesty, wisdom, humility and truth.

RAINBOW CANDLE:

We light the rainbow candle to honour our openness to Spirit and our intention towards engaging people across a wide spectrum of diversity, ability and identity and to mark our commitment to resist oppression and remove barriers to participation in the life and work of the Region and society.

CHRIST CANDLE:

We light the Christ candle in our midst to remind us of the light of love deep within every one of us that connects us to each other and all of life. The energy of this light calls us to be all we can be, to live life abundantly rooted in love as Jesus taught.

## A TIME OF PRAYER

**As we gather all over Shining Waters Regional Council,**

**we open our hearts to the potential stirring in our midst:  
of working together to impact the world around us in life-giving ways;  
of collaborating through our resources of people, ideas and tools;  
of connecting to deepen our faith and broaden the expression  
of our commitment to a compassionate world  
rooted in social and eco justice.**

**We ask for the blessings of the Spirit to awaken in our midst,  
blessings of creativity,  
of a passion for right relations,  
of a profound understanding that we are one,  
of energy to fill our lives and our world  
with the transformative power of love.**

**Inspired by creativity, beauty, future possibilities  
and the Spirit dancing in our midst, we pray. Amen**

#### WE LISTEN

READING from Ephesians 4

In the letter to the Ephesians we are assured that when we speak the truth in love we will be the mature body of Christ in the world. We are reminded that when we work together we are able to make a positive impact in the world. As the author of the letter says “Joined and held together by every supporting ligament the body of Christ will grow and build itself up in love as each part does its work.”

STORYTIME FOR ALL AGES

I invite you to imagine that every one of us here in this room has a piece of beautiful wool that is as long as they are tall ... so from the floor all the way up to the top of our heads. I want you to think about your piece of wool and all that you could do with it ... what could you use it for? (*possible answers in case people are struggling to come up with ideas ... cut it into smaller pieces to use for tying shoes ... put it on a ponytail as a bow ... double it over and hang something from it like a medallion ... use it to tie a flashlight to a belt*)

Now imagine with me that we tie all our pieces together. To do that we need to turn to people around us and tap them on the shoulder and smile at them ... then in the realm of our magical imaginations – all the pieces of wool are linked together.

Now think about our long piece of wool that is as long as we all are tall – what can we do with it? *(possible answers ... make a scarf ... create a garland for a Christmas Tree or the tree outside ... use it to decorate around a Community Garden)*

Now imagine with me that we connect our long piece of wool with the wool from other Communities of Faith around us here in Shining Waters Regional Council. That would make five or ten times longer than what we have now. What could we do with it then? *(make a prayer shawl ... create a game for a youth group or summer day camp ... link us together in a parade where we tell the world that we care)*

Now imagine that all those pieces of beautiful wool that have combined together are just like our gifts and resources that we have in each of our Communities of Faith. And we put our gifts and talents and people together – think of all the things we might do together *(a youth group, men's breakfast, work together on a social or eco issue, bring in special speakers, celebrate special times together)*

That's one of our goals as a new Regional Council. We are invited to think about what are the things we can do together that we can't do alone. It's a good question for everyday life too. When we work as a team, when we collaborate using all of our gifts and strengths and talents and ideas – we can do amazing things to create a kind and caring world, a place that reflects Jesus' teachings of how the Kingdom of God here on earth comes when the power that reigns is love.

HYMN: VU #649 Chorus only Walk with Me

## READINGS

As we prepare to enter more deeply into relationship with each other throughout Shining Waters Regional Council and beyond, we are invited to allow some readings speak to our minds, hearts and the core of wisdom within us. As they are read simply notice what you notice ... you don't need to engage every word ... let the images or ideas that speak to you linger within you to prayerfully open you to how we will be together in this new community we are creating and how we can imagine new possibilities together:

Jesus said, Love one another as I have loved you.

“My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world.” Jack Layton's final thoughts to us

Winnie the Pooh nudges us with this thought "You can't stay in your corner of the forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes."

From Thomas Merton ... "To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence, for God is love. Love is my true identity. Selflessness is my true self. Love is my true character. Love is my name."

"The conclusion is always the same: love is the most powerful and still the most unknown energy in the world." -Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

From poet Mary Oliver:

I want to think again of dangerous and noble things.

I want to be light and frolicsome.

I want to be improbable, beautiful and afraid of nothing, as though I had wings.

Tell me, what is it that you plan to do with your one wild and precious life? Mary Oliver

God speaks to us through the prophet Isaiah: The time will come when broken relationships will be healed and the wolf and the lamb lie down together, when deserts will blossom, and when tools of violence will be turned into tools for nurture.

The most regretful people on earth are those who felt the call to creative work, who felt their own creative power restive and uprising, and gave to it neither power nor time. Mary Oliver

In these times of change Albert Einstein reminds us: "Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere."

"We have stopped asking what went wrong and how to fix it. Instead, we ask "What are the possibilities here, and who cares?" -Marvin Weisbord

Margaret Mead: Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world - indeed it's the only thing that ever has.

In the letter of John we are reminded: "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. If we love one another, God lives in us, and God's love is perfected in us."

HYMN: MV 14 Where Two or Three are Gathered

## REFLELCTIONS: Creating Connections

In these times of change in which we live,  
we remember Jesus' promise to us  
that we are not alone.

The gospel stories attest to the ongoing support of Jesus' vision for community:

Where two or three are gathered I'll be there ...  
Jesus with us ... shaping us ... inspiring us ... challenging us ...

We are not alone in the midst of these times of change  
that are impacting us in our church and in our world ...

a time that is filled with  
overwhelming painful realities  
and  
overflowing positive possibilities.

This is a critical time...  
a time to actively be open to future possibilities  
of how we can continue to be part of creating a world  
that aligns with the central teaching from Jesus  
about the Kingdom of God on earth,  
where the power that reigns is love.

The intentions behind our new governance model in The United Church of Canada

is to ensure that our primary focus is on ministry and mission,  
of actively being the presence of God's love in the world  
rather than investing significant time and energy  
into sustaining the institution of the church.

We are reminded in the introduction of the Governance Policies  
for Shining Waters Regional Council that

the underlying focus of the changes in our governance model is

“the empowerment of local communities of faith to be

vibrant, strong, and healthy

as they live God’s mission in their context and in the world.”

To this end we seek to function with the awareness that

the structures of the Church should not exist for their own sake,

but rather, to support and inspire the mission of local communities of faith.

One of the areas of development within the new model

is Clusters and Networks which are intended to be initiated and supported by

energy and excitement that emerges at the grassroots level ...

where Communities of Faith

and people passionate about a particular topic

connect to engage in ministry together.

A key question that was posed

as conversations began around Clusters and Networks is:

“What can we do together that we can’t do alone?”

As noted in the intro of our Governance Policies:

It is important to be clear that

the encouragement of cluster and networks

is not intended as an ‘add-on’ to the governance model,

but rather, as a call to dedicated church people

to re-think the power and the gift

of collegial, supportive relationships  
that nurture creative approaches  
to living the Gospel as a faithful witness of discipleship.

The hope is that as we live into being a Regional Council community,  
there will be desire, energy, and commitment to journeying together  
to deepen connections built on common areas of  
interest, outreach, longing for learning, justice seeking,  
and shared experience and challenges.

Already we have seen some exciting new groups forming.  
And we have seen old patterns giving way to new collaborations.  
Though there was a time when congregations sometimes  
lived like silos, disconnected from one another by living solo lives,  
... there now is a shift.

The same shift is happening at the denominational level  
with staff across the country collaborating in new and more intentional ways.

“Creating Connections” is the theme of  
the Inaugural meeting of Shining Waters Regional Council  
so that we can begin to imagine and develop  
new ways of being in relationship with each other.

And now Communities of Faith all over the Region are being invited  
to join our hearts and our voices with others and be intentional  
about how we will develop healthy life-giving ways of collaborating.

After this time of Reflection we will be invited to share in a liturgy that is being used at the Inaugural Meeting that seeks to name our understanding of why we collaborate rooted in scripture and our commitment to right relations.

We know we are in a time of change.

In times of change we know we will be changed as we allow ourselves to be open to what we will become.

An often cited image of change,  
of the power of possibility and transformation,  
is the butterfly.

It is the imaginal cells in the caterpillar  
that guide the creation of the butterfly.

Like the caterpillar we are invited to be open  
to the awakening of creative imaginings amongst us  
as we too seek to emerge in new and beautiful ways.

May it be so by the power of the Spirit moving in our midst  
and through our intention for our actions to be rooted in the teachings of Jesus  
and in our commitments and declarations as The United Church of Canada. Amen

\*THEME SONG: Awake, Arise

\*QUESTION OF INTENTION (please continue to rise as you are able)

One: A question to us as the people of Shining Waters: Are we willing to be open to how Spirit will call us, trusting that we are being led into a new way of collaborating

together? Are we willing to be open to the creativity emerging in our midst so that new possibilities can be explored?

**All: We are willing, and we will hold one another across Shining Waters Regional Council in our prayers and ask for blessings upon each other's ministry.**

\* OUR COMMITMENT TO COLLABORATE

One: We are invited to join in declaring our commitment to collaborate as together we respond to God's call to us. It is based on scripture and our commitment to live in right relations. We declare together:

All: **Our commitment and intention to collaborate in healthy life-giving ways is rooted in our sense of call:**

**To love one another as we are beloved;**

**To band together to create a world where broken relationships are healed and the wolf and the lamb lie down together, where deserts blossom, and where tools of violence are turned into tools to nurture life;**

**To seek justice, love kindness and walk humbly together in peace upon this earth;**

**To be intentional about how we are in relationship so that the power that reigns is love.**

*Based on John 12, Jesus' Baptism, Isaiah Vision, Micah,  
One Earth Community, Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action,  
Ephesians 4, Kingdom of God Parables*

WE RESPOND

OFFERTORY (*whatever is your usual pattern*)

Offertory Hymn: MV 27

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE *underscore with Deep in Our Hearts MV #154 all the way through so that when we sing each verse that weaves through the prayer the music is in people's minds.*

*Open the time of prayer in your usual fashion – to name prayers of thanksgiving and concern*

Let us pray:

Creator God,  
we open our hearts this day in thanks  
for all the blessings of life.  
We thank you for the vision you have given us  
of the oneness of creation,  
and the blessings that are possible  
when we truly feel at one with each other and with creation.  
Help us look at each other in the same way you look at us:  
with understanding, compassion, forgiveness, hope,  
and as all part of one family.  
Help us live out a common vision,  
a common song, a common story of oneness.

*(Sung MV 154)*

*Deep in our hearts,  
there is a common vision;  
deep in our hearts  
there is a common song;  
deep in our hearts  
there is a common story,  
telling Creation that we are one.*

God of harmony,  
guide us in our attitudes, words, and actions  
as we seek to live out a common purpose,  
a common goal of justice and peace for all.  
Free us from draining judgements, limited thinking,  
and illusions of separateness,  
so that we come to view each person,  
each part of creation, as sacred,  
and so treat everyone and everything with fairness,

kindness, and compassion.

In this way, may we do our part  
to help bring about the justice and peace we all seek.

*Deep in our hearts  
there is a common purpose;  
deep in our hearts  
there is a common goal;  
deep in our hearts  
there is a sacred message,  
justice and peace in harmony.*

God of all,  
our hearts go out this day to all those whose story is one  
of suffering, loss, pain, or loneliness.  
We pray for those who are recovering ...  
for those seeking freedom where there is war, cruelty, and injustice;  
for refugees wandering in great numbers upon the earth;  
for those struggling with abusive relationships, addictions,  
and inner wounds that have not yet healed.  
Where we can offer healing, where we can bring hope,  
where we can contribute something helpful,  
help us find the courage and strength to do so.  
Help us work together so that freedom and love  
flow like an everlasting stream.

*Deep in our hearts  
there is a common longing  
deep in our hearts  
there is a common theme  
deep in our hearts  
there is a common current,*

*flowing to freedom like a stream.*

And so, Creator God, we pray for a deeper awareness of our oneness.

We pray that each of us will give  
of our time, talents, finances, prayers, being and service—  
knowing that by so doing, we will become good stewards  
of our precious earth and be in harmony  
with our common vision, with the way Jesus lived,  
with you, and with all creation.

By the power of the Spirit, may this be our common song!

*Deep in our hearts,  
there is a common vision;  
deep in our hearts  
there is a common song;  
deep in our hearts  
there is a common story,  
telling Creation that we are one.*

We bring these and all other prayers of our hearts  
before you, loving God,  
as we join our voices together in the prayer of Jesus ...

HYMN: VU 697 O For a World (tune Amazing Grace VU 266)

COMMISSIONING AND BLESSING

**All: Let us go forth into the world  
with a daring and tender love.  
The world is waiting.  
Let us go in peace.  
And as we journey  
may we see the face of God's love in everyone we meet  
and may everyone we meet see the face of God's love in us.**

## POSTLUDE

OTHER OPTIONS that could be incorporated if they are preferred which are also being used at the Inaugural Meeting:

### A CALL TO COLLABORATE:

From *MENDING THE WORLD* adopted in 1997 by the 36th General Council of The United Church of Canada

One: For life to survive, grow and flourish in “the wilderness of the world”—amid the exploding bombs, the fragile atmosphere, the burning rains, the polluted waters, the many illnesses, and the myriad expressions of violence—all people of compassion and wisdom need to work together in the common task of caring for one another and the whole of God’s creation.

In An Affirmation from the Mending the World report we declare ...

All: We believe that God calls the Church to do separately only what it cannot do with others,  
to care for itself in order to care for others,  
to set basic human needs above institutional enrichment,  
to give and not to count the cost.

We believe that God calls the Church to profess its faith in ways that honour God’s love for all people and creation,  
to make decisions that demonstrate an unqualified commitment to justice, peace and compassion,  
to discern and celebrate God’s Spirit in people of other religions and ideologies, and to stand first with the poor.

We believe that God yearns for the healing of all creation,  
and calls the Church to share that yearning  
by joining now with other persons of good will  
in the search for justice, wholeness and love.

### A NEW CREED

We are not alone,  
we live in God's world.

We believe in God:  
who has created and is creating,

who has come in Jesus,  
the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others  
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,  
God is with us.  
We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.