

**“UNRAVELED BY JOY—
SEEKING GOD IN THE FACE OF UNCERTAINTY—
The Thirteenth Sunday After Pentecost
August 30, 2020
10:30 A.M.**

*Crescent Fort Rouge is a safe place for all people to worship regardless of race, creed, age, ability, cultural background, sexual orientation or gender expression
Our mission is to invite all who would join us, to celebrate the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, through worship, music, fellowship and outreach, to help us build a fairer and more joyful world*

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF TERRITORY

We gather for work and worship on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, and Dakota nations, and the homeland of the Metis people. Long before adventurers, colonizers, settlers, refugees, or immigrants from other places came to the place we call Manitoba, the people of Canada's first nations held this land as a sacred trust from the Creator. They offered assistance to the first travelers to this place and shared their knowledge for survival in what was at times a harsh climate. May our relationships as settlers and Original Peoples be based in honour and deep respect.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

Marc: God is light, in whom there is no darkness at all.

There is nothing hidden, that will not be revealed.

We light this flame to affirm that new light
is ever waiting to break through
to enlighten our ways:

That new truth is ever waiting
to break through to illumine our minds,
and that new love is ever waiting
to break through to warm our hearts.

May we be open to this light,
and to the rich possibilities that it brings us.

Deep calls unto deep,
life calls unto life,
light calls unto light.

We are a rainbow people, and in all our diversity
Christ's light shines through us, making us one

Here is God's good kin-dom!

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

Marc: What happens when our world falls apart? How do we press onward when our tightly-knit plans unravel into loose threads? What do we become when our identity—or the path we're on—comes undone? What if all of this is not the end we fear it will be?

In our unraveling, sometimes life surprises us with unexpected joy, love, and hope—with a new beginning we couldn't have imagined. Sometimes we need God to unravel us, for we long to be changed.

OPENING PRAYER

God, you lift our hearts when we feel most down,
you strike the light of joy in the midst of despair's gloom,
you surprise us with wonder and awe,
enter into our hearts this morning, we pray.

Open our minds to the endless possibilities
you create for growing closer to you.

Open our eyes to your presence in all things,
that we might respond in joy. Amen.

WE HEAR AND REFLECT ON THE GOOD NEWS

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE READING

READING—Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7

One hot summer afternoon Abraham was sitting by the entrance to his tent near the sacred trees of Mamre, when the LORD appeared to him.

² Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. He quickly ran to meet them, bowed with his face to the ground, ³ and said, "Please come to my home where I can serve you. ⁴ I'll have some water brought, so you can wash your feet, then you can rest under the tree. ⁵ Let me get you some food to give you strength before you leave. I would be honored to serve you."

"Thank you very much," they answered. "We accept your offer."

⁶ Abraham quickly went to his tent and said to Sarah, “Hurry! Get a large sack of flour and make some bread.”

⁷ After saying this, he rushed off to his herd of cattle and picked out one of the best calves, which his servant quickly prepared. ⁸ He then served his guests some yogurt and milk together with the meat.

While they were eating, he stood near them under the trees, ⁹ and they asked, “Where is your wife Sarah?”

“She is right there in the tent,” Abraham answered.

¹⁰ One of the guests was the LORD, and he said, “I’ll come back about this time next year, and when I do, Sarah will already have a son.”

Sarah was behind Abraham, listening at the entrance to the tent. ¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were very old, and Sarah was well past the age for having children. ¹² So she laughed and said to herself, “Now that I am worn out and my husband is old, will I really know such happiness?”^[a]

¹³ The LORD asked Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Does she doubt that she can have a child in her old age? ¹⁴ I am the LORD! There is nothing too difficult for me. I’ll come back next year at the time I promised, and Sarah will already have a son.”

¹⁵ Sarah was so frightened that she lied and said, “I didn’t laugh.”

“Yes, you did!” he answered...

21 The LORD was good to Sarah and kept his promise. ² Although Abraham was very old, Sarah had a son exactly at the time God had said. ³ Abraham named his son Isaac, ⁴ and when the boy was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, just as the LORD had commanded.

⁵ Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born, ⁶ and Sarah said, “God has made me laugh.^[a] Now everyone will laugh with me. ⁷ Who would have dared to tell Abraham that someday I would have a child? But in his old age, I have given him a son.”

WE RESPOND IN FAITH

A READING “To Proclaim A Dancing God”—*Ralph Milton*

At first it was a cough;
then a stifled gasp;
then a watering of nose and eyes—
a rasping, wheezing, rattling noise
that might have been a full-blown case of asthma.
Or a stroke.

But it was laughter.

It was laughter!
From arthritic toes to gray and thinning hair,
it was a laughter from despair to hope—
laughter from the tomb to resurrection.

The old crone pulled the tent flap tight
across her toothless mouth
to hide her laughter;

Hide it from her sniggering, impotent mate—

Hide the laughter from the bright-eyed strangers
who came
announcing new and ancient promises
a child of hope
for Sarah's ancient, arid womb—
for Abraham's ancient, arid land.

But hide it from the future, she could not.
Sarah birthed a promise,
in a child named Laughter,
And so proclaimed a dancing God
into the ages.

AN INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP

As Abraham welcomed the strangers
so God welcomes us.

God can take what seems like an absurdity,
and turns it into a possibility...

God coaxes to sing springtime alleluias,
where once we saw only a grey dawn...

God calls us out of the tombs we inherit
into undreamed of tomorrows...

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION *John van de Laar*

Holy One, long before the change of name,
before the first signs of new life
showed the beginnings of promises fulfilled,
You asked Abram to make his home among foreigners,
and share the blessing that was to come.

And now, O God, you ask the same faith of us:

The faith to count ourselves among the least,
to find our place alongside the poor and broken;

The faith to trust in your mercy and your promises,
and to share what we have received;

The faith to wait expectantly
for your reign of justice and equity,
together with those who most need its gifts.

Teach us to be children of Abram,
sharers of the blessings we enjoy:

The blessing of plenty
shared with those who have need,

The blessing of healing
shared with those who are sick and wounded,

The blessing of joy
shared with those who celebrate
and of tears shared with those who grieve,

The blessing of friendship shared
with those who are excluded,
and of solidarity with those who fight injustice,

The blessing of peace shared with those in conflict,
and of confrontation shared with those who bring harm;

And in some small way, may our faith and our sharing,
help to bring your promises into being
in our world.

Amen.

PRAYER *Jock Stein, adapted*

We commend to You those who work in harsh conditions,
and those who have no work;

those whose lives are drab and grey;
those whose poor health takes away delight in living;
those who are lonely;
those who have no home of their own.

Grant them the help and comfort which they need,
and the encouragement
which will enable them to live with hope and courage,

We pray for the elderly,
asking for them clear faith and human support.

We pray for those in middle years,
asking for them wisdom in their choices,
and the recovery of a sense of wonder.

We pray for the young,
asking for them good opportunities,
and that their ambitions include the desire to serve.

May we all continue to seek the God of every age,
made known in Jesus Christ,
the greatest friend of all.

And now, gathering all our prayers into one,
We pray together as Jesus taught us...

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.**

**Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil:**

**For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

WORDS OF BLESSING AND SENDING

FINAL WORDS

May the God of surprises
bring smiles and joys to the everyday and ordinary.

May the God of love
be seen in all we do and say.

May the Spirit of Joy
Be with us now and forevermore.

Go forth rejoicing,
for the good work has just begun!
Amen.