

Dunsford United Church  
January 28, 2024 – Fourth Sunday after Epiphany  
Pulpit Presider: Rev. Anne Hepburn

†= stand as you are able

WELCOME AND CELEBRATIONS (Birthdays/Anniversaries, etc.)

† GATHERING HYMN: MV #145 “Draw the Circle Wide” (Gordon Light)

*R:* Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still. Let this be our song,  
no one stands alone, standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

1 God the still-point of the circle, ‘round whom all creation turns;  
Nothing lost, but held forever, in God’s gracious arms. *R*

2 Let our hearts touch far horizons, so encompass great and small;  
Let our loving know no borders, faithful to God’s call. *R*

3 Let the dreams we dream be larger, than we’ve ever dreamed before;  
let the dream of Christ be in us, open every door. *R*

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE AND THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION CANDLE

Each Sunday morning, we gather around this candle, a symbol of Christ. This ritual brings focus to our time of worship; a time when we pause to renew our faith and spiritual life with our Creator.

*Written by Jim McKean Gatherings 2023-4. Used with permission.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE LANDS (Unison)

**We acknowledge, honour and respect this land and the Anishinaabe / Mississauga peoples with whom Treaty 20, Williams treaty, was signed, on the lands where we are. We acknowledge and give thanks for the lands and people of treaties and unceded territories of all who are worshipping. It is up to all of us to live into truth, respect and reconciliation with all our relations.**

## CALL TO WORSHIP

You have a great capacity inside you to accept God.

**It is a wonderful gift.**

We as adults have assumptions about how life should fly.

**We need to withhold those ideas and allow life to be what it is.**

Incarnation underscores the divine and vulnerable gift of life.

**Let us celebrate the sacred quality of our human lives.**

*Written by Daryl Webber, Gatherings, 2023-4, p. 41. Used with permission.*

† HYMN: VU #213 “Rejoice, the Lord is King” (Charles Wesley)

- 1 Rejoice the Lord is King! Your risen Lord adore!  
Rejoice, give thanks and sing and triumph evermore.  
*R:* Lift up your heart, lift up your voice: rejoice; again I say, rejoice!
- 2 Jesus the Saviour reigns, the God of truth and love;  
when he had purged our sins, he took his seat above. *R*
- 3 God's kingdom cannot fail; Christ rules o'er earth and heaven;  
the keys of death and hell are to our Jesus given. *R*
- 4 Rejoice in glorious hope, for Christ, the judge, shall come  
to glorify the saints for their eternal home.  
We soon shall hear the archangel's voice;  
the trump of God shall sound, rejoice!

## OPENING PRAYER

**Loving God, you have called us in, and we've come. It is good to be together in this place. We come bearing the marks and scars of our living and offer them to your healing presence. Bless us as we gather each one of us, that we may know your spirit moving among us. Bless our time together that we may as disciples, be a blessing in your world. Amen**

*Written by Bob Root, Gatherings 2023-4, p. 43. Used with permission.*

INVITATION TO OFFERING: Let us bring forward the offering.

† HYMN OF DEDICATION: VU #541 (Words: Thomas Ken)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures high and low;  
give thanks to God in love made known: Creator, Word and Spirit, One.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Through this offering we are given an opportunity to give thanks to God. We are given an opportunity to make a difference in the life of the world around us. Let us give with an open heart. **Amen**

STORY AND PRAYERS FOR THE YOUNG AND YOUNG AT HEART

What are we afraid of?

CHILDREN LEAVE FOR JUNIOR CHURCH

### **WE HEAR GOD'S WORD**

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Old Testament Psalm 111 p. 833 responsively

I will thank you, God, with my whole heart,  
in the company of the upright, in their assembly.

**Great are your works, O God,  
studied by all who delight in them.**

Honour and majesty are your work;  
your righteousness endures forever.

**You have won renown for your wonders;  
you are gracious and full of compassion.**

You give food to those who fear you;  
you keep your covenant always in mind.

**You have shown your power in action,  
giving your people the heritage of nations.**

The works of your hands are faithful and just;  
all your precepts trustworthy.

**They stand fast forever and ever;  
grounded in justice and truth.**

You sent redemption to your people;  
**you decreed your covenant forever.**

**Holy and awesome is your name.**

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom;  
**those who practise it have good understanding.  
May your praise endure forever.**

New Testament Mark 1:21-28 A man with an unclean spirit is healed in Capernaum (read by Anne)

<sup>21</sup> They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. <sup>22</sup> They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. <sup>23</sup> Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, <sup>24</sup> and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." <sup>25</sup> But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" <sup>26</sup> And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. <sup>27</sup> They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He<sup>[a]</sup> commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." <sup>28</sup> At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

† HYMN: VU #602 "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (John Fawcett)

- 1   Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;  
     the unity of heart and mind is like to that above.
- 2   Before our Maker's throne we pour our ardent prayers;  
     our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, our comforts and our cares.
- 3   We share each other's woes, each other's burdens bear;  
     and often for each other flows the sympathizing tear.

- 4 This glorious hope revives our courage on the way;  
that we shall live in perfect love in God's eternal day.

MESSAGE: "Unclean Spirits? Don't be ashamed!!"

In the Big Bang Theory prequel tv show you may have watched the parts where the older brother George gets his girlfriend pregnant. They live in a pretty insular area and the pregnancy is a huge shock especially at the church they attend.

One Sunday they are invited to hold hands to pray for universal love. That pewmate refuses to hold hands with Sheldon's mom because of the shame of the pregnancy out of wedlock. Not sure if she thinks its catching (wink wink).

She is understandably upset and gets up to leave with Sheldon and his twin-Missy. But Sheldon comes back in the sanctuary and calls out the hypocrisy.

Later the pastor comes to their house to beg them to come back. I haven't quite found the next episode but I think what happened is an illustration of family and community shaming. It's powerful and painful.

Our gospel passage today is startling - Jesus is speaking in a synagogue and a man with an unclean spirit is calling out "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?"

Jesus calls on the unclean spirit to come out of the man and it does. The man convulses and the spirit leaves.

I have always wondered if this was based on a story of a person experiencing a convulsive disorder like epilepsy. Not much was known about epilepsy until sometime in the last 50-100 years. Before that it was often thought to be a case of a person possessed by an evil spirit or more recently, a degenerative neurological disorder. Neither of course -a glitch in the wiring is more like it.

But a book I read last week has recast the concept of unclean spirits into a new light, the Bible's ancient wisdom notwithstanding.

In *Daring Greatly*, Brene Brown speaks of the meaning and dangers of Shame. What is Shame?

In the Britannica Dictionary it is a feeling of guilt, regret, or sadness that you have because you know you have done something wrong *or not done something you should*. It can also mean embarrassment or dishonour.

In psychology terms Shame is **a feeling of embarrassment or humiliation that arises from the perception of having done something dishonorable, immoral, or improper**. People who experience shame usually try to hide the thing they feel ashamed.

Brown speaks of shame differently. She says:

a- we all feel shame. (We would be sociopaths if we did not)

b. we are afraid to talk about it.

c. the more silent we are, the more shame controls us.

She goes on to say that one of the bigger issues with shame is that it puts us at risk of disconnection. Because we are wired for love, belonging and connection, the feeling that we have done something wrong puts us at risk of being disconnected, unloved and excluded.

Shame makes us feel flawed and therefore unworthy of love, connection and belonging. It is intensely painful.

One might imagine that shame of this intensity would be for extreme situations. Not so. Apparently shame shows up everywhere - including:

Appearance

Money/work

Motherhood or fatherhood

Family

Parenting

Mental or physical health

Addiction

Sex

Trauma

Stereotype or label.

Ageing

Religion

That's quite a laundry list!

I suspect that you can think of excellent and very personal examples of shame that you have experienced.

The thing is – shame is a personally, painful feeling. It is HARD to talk about shame. It conveys awful feelings and exposing them means exposing ourselves as “lesser than”.

Sometimes to avoid feeling “lesser than” we start to project our pain and embarrassment onto others around us-I often think of the bullies in the world when I think of this kind of reaction. When they have awful feelings they lash out at others. Makes sense - it takes the attention away from them.

Men and women are known to handle shame differently although I suggest that it may be driven by context.

Men are often seen as being more aggressive and threatening.

So when Jesus calls out the evil spirits from the man in the synagogue, the man calls out attacking him - the preacher! But then he convulses and the evil spirit

leaves. It seems possible that Jesus was calling out the shame - and that once cleaned of shame the man was calm and relaxed.

That is not to say that he will never feel shame again - we are all prone to feeling shame over our lives - because we are empathetic and conscientious.

The key to coping according to Brown is to develop shame resilience.

This is important because when we feel shame our brain goes into fight or flight.

Part of our brain feels the emotional flood of feelings and the rational part can't override it immediately because fight or flight is a very strong drive.

Most people who are in fight or flight feel panicked and out of control. They are not calm or rational and they feel unable to contain their emotions.

1. Recognize what it is. What triggered it. A mistake at work?
2. Practice critical awareness. Do a reality check on the message and expectations that are driving your shame.
3. Reach out - own and share your story. We can't experience empathy from others if we don't connect with them.
4. Speak about it. Talk about how you feel and what you need when you feel shame. Secrecy drives shame and makes it more damaging.

Most of the time we can find a partner or a friend or someone to help untangle the message you got and how to rationally combat it. Often they will say that whatever happened was not as bad as you thought. They may help you practice a response. Most importantly they will reassure you that you are not the only one to do whatever you did.

Capernaum is known as the city of comfort which makes some sense since several miracles happened there under Jesus' care. I was not able to find out what happened to the man with the spirits which were excised but I think he hopefully was healed of the affliction whether shame or other issues. I hope you all have some greater insight into the human experience that causes so much pain in us.

Whether we call it shame resilience or emotional intelligence, I hope it offers you a way out of the shadows that shame creates in silence. Amen

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE: *Please remember Kristen, Emma and Nancy in your prayers.*

God of gold, we seek your glory:

the richness that transforms drabness into colour,  
and brightens our dullness with vibrant light;  
your wonder and joy at the heart of all life.

God of incense, we offer you our prayer:

our spoken and unspeakable longings,  
 our questioning of truth,  
 our searching for your mystery deep within.

God of myrrh, we cry out to you in our suffering:  
 the pain of all our rejections and bereavements,  
 our baffled despair at undeserved suffering,  
 our rage at continuing injustice.

In our wealth, in our yearning, in our anger and loss,  
 we embrace you, God-with-us. Amen.

*Voices United, page 88, used with permission.*

## 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, for ever and ever. Amen**

## WE ARE SENT OUT IN FAITH TO SERVE

## COMMISSIONING AND BLESSING

As you go from this place, remember whose you are.  
 Remember to be the disciples you are called to be; unafraid and unashamed.  
 Remember to love as you are loved. Amen  
*Written by Cheryl Dillon Gatherings 2023-4, p. 41. Used with permission.*

† CHORAL RESPONSE: "Go Now in Peace" (Words: D Besig and N Price)

Go now in peace, never be afraid. God will go with you each hour of every day. Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true. Know He will guide you in all you do. Go now in love and show you believe. Reach out to others so all the world can see God will be there watching from above. Go now in peace, in faith, and in love. Amen, Amen, Amen



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Reminder to all Board Team Leaders: 2023 year-in-review reports are due **on** or before Wed. January 31st, 2024. Please send it as a Word document (not as a PDF) or in the body of an email to: [dunsfordunitedchurch@bellnet.ca](mailto:dunsfordunitedchurch@bellnet.ca)

Call for Leadership: DUC is looking for volunteers to fill the following positions:

- Vice Chair of the Board
- Spiritual Leadership Team Leader – This person will attend Board meetings. The team comprises Worship and Fellowship; Junior Church; and the United Church Women. The smaller groups provide their reports to the Team Leader to present to the Board.
- Leadership Development Team Leader (Ministry & Personnel)
- Treasurer – This position works with our Bookkeeper

For information or job descriptions, please speak to John Lummiss, Board Chair

Please consider signing up to run the slideshow, read Scripture, provide a Ministry of Music; provide refreshments. The calendars are on the bulletin board.

Milk bag Mats: The group meets in the Church on Wednesdays at 10 AM. All are welcome to make mats and enjoy some fellowship. Speak with Shirley Wilkinson.

December Financials

Income:	\$31,939.25
	-\$23,269.00 Federal Government grant for the accessible doors
	<u>-\$1,475.00 Memorial Fund</u>
	\$7,195.25
Expenses:	\$4,451.80
Net Profit:	\$2,743.45

Stewardship Second: Every day we receive abundant gifts, but we are not meant to keep them. When you pass along a gift to a neighbour or the world, trust that you and they will have enough.

### **DUNSFORD UNITED CHURCH**

Office Hours: Wed. Office 9-5 † Tel: 705-793-2511

Email: [dunsfordunitedchurch@bellnet.ca](mailto:dunsfordunitedchurch@bellnet.ca)

Website: [www.dunsfordunitedchurch.com](http://www.dunsfordunitedchurch.com)