

May 24, 2020 – Outreach service

Prepared by Faith United's Outreach Team with the message provided by Laura Tuohy, Communications Coordinator of the Bruce Trail Conservancy.

Let us centre ourselves for worship. If you would like, have a real, battery-operated or imaginary candle available.

CALL TO WORSHIP

We are connected.
We are one in Spirit
We are different, unique, yet
We are one in the body of Christ.
We belong to one tree of life
We are one people on one planet,
Called by God to be caretakers of this earth.
Come let us worship in unity with all creation

(Jean Francis, St. Andrew's UC. Indian Head, Sask)

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

Light a candle and say the following

We light this candle recognizing the presence of Creator God, Great Spirit of God, God of Life and Living, manifested in the Risen One, the Christ and all of creation.

OPENING PRAYER

As we gather today in the sanctuary of our own homes, yet sharing our collective worship through technology, we give thanks and praise to you, God of all creation.

We give thanks for the restorative and nurturing of our spirits when in communion with your creation, giving evidence of your omnipresence.

We offer our commitment to be good stewards of the earth so the generations to come may also enjoy the beauty of the earth.

God of creation, let us grow to love and respect nature and the beauty that surrounds us every day.

May it be so. Amen.

(adapted from prayer by Donna Kelly, First South UC, First South, N.S.)

HYMN: Called by Earth and Sky

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGIYVfEaATA>

SCRIPTURE READING

Christian stewardship is a core feature of the Christian ethic and that it is an important Christian responsibility. Stewardship is a part of how Christians respond to the salvation they received by faith and grace. It can be seen that one's faith and gratitude for salvation drives one to become answerable to God. Christians accept Christian stewardship as being fundamental to human existence and their life in general since one's religion or beliefs and

how one lives one's everyday life cannot be separated. Christian stewardship is ultimately a way of Christian living.

As members of Faith United, we recognize that Christian stewardship can take many forms. Our concern today is for the sanctity of the earthly environment.

Genesis 2:15 -- The LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

Jeremiah 2:7 -- I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when you entered, you defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination.

May we understand what these words are meant to say to each of us. Amen.

MESSAGE: Connecting to nature along a ribbon of wilderness

This message has been prepared by Laura Tuohy, Communications Coordinator at the Bruce Trail Conservancy for the Faith United Milton congregation on May 24, 2020 and is also shared with Palermo United. ©Laura Tuohy 2020. Provided here with permission.

Drawn by the mission of the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC), Laura moved to Dundas, Ontario, ten years ago to work for the organization. She works with a small team of staff and volunteers to increase awareness of and support for the BTC.

Spring is here. Its exuberant, rejuvenating signs are all around us. Flowers are blossoming; trees are unfurling their brilliant green leaves; birds are joining the dawn chorus. Just witnessing these small signs can make us feel revitalized.

Every spring, the Bruce Trail comes alive – beginning in Niagara and surging like a wave of budding, blooming and buzzing life to the Trail's northern tip in Tobermory. The excitement and anticipation in the air are palpable.

Yet this spring has been unusual, to say the least. Our world has been shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic. We find ourselves indoors far more than we might choose, and isolated from others in ways unlike ever before. To reduce the spread of the virus in and between communities, we have been staying off the Bruce Trail and away from other outdoor destinations.

Times like this bring into stark focus those things which are most important to us. For many, spending time outdoors connecting with the natural world is key to our physical and mental well-being. Now, as natural areas reopen, we are eager to reconnect.

We are fortunate in this area to have the natural spaces of the Niagara Escarpment at our doorstep. We can explore deep forests, stunning waterfalls, cooling caves and soaring cliffs – all in Canada's most densely populated region. For this we have an earlier generation to thank.

In the 1960s, a committed group of citizens in the Hamilton/Halton area was concerned about the loss of natural areas due to increasing resource extraction on the Niagara Escarpment, and

about the lack of opportunities for people to connect with nature. They conceived of an incredible idea, a footpath along the length of the Niagara Escarpment. This footpath would not only give people a way to experience the wonders of the Escarpment, it would inspire a desire to protect it. This became the Bruce Trail.

As a grassroots movement, those early volunteers founded the Bruce Trail Association (now the Bruce Trail Conservancy) and began bringing communities together to build trail, work with landowners, and protect the Niagara Escarpment for future generations.

Today, the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) maintains over 1300 km of trails and is one of Ontario's most active land trusts. Over 1400 volunteers, supported by a small staff, work together to plan, build, and promote the Bruce Trail, and acquire and steward a growing number of protected natural areas.

The Bruce Trail runs like a ribbon along the Niagara Escarpment through private land, parks, conservation areas, and BTC-protected natural areas. Hikers can access the trail at over 300 different locations and follow its white rectangular trail markers with the help of Bruce Trail maps, or led by a volunteer hike leader from one of the nine Bruce Trail clubs.

Many of you have likely explored the Bruce Trail, perhaps without even realizing it, as you sought opportunities to walk in nature with friends or family. Perhaps you are already a member or volunteer of the Bruce Trail Conservancy. If so, thank you. As you may know, the work of the BTC is funded not through government dollars, but through the committed support of Bruce Trail Conservancy members and donors.

Since the Bruce Trail has been around for over 50 years, it can be tempting to think of it as a permanent, unchanging footpath winding through protected land. However, 32% of the Bruce Trail is still vulnerable to development.

Increasing demand for land along the Niagara Escarpment means that the remaining greenspace is ever more precious. At the same time, as society becomes increasingly disconnected from the natural world, the risk of losing it altogether is great. Not only does this mean loss of unique habitats and species, but also loss of the important ecological services that natural areas provide like clean water, clean air, climate regulation, and opportunities for physical and mental renewal.

Each year the BTC preserves more of this irreplaceable Niagara Escarpment along the Bruce Trail through purchasing land and accepting donations of land. With the support of members and donors, the BTC is ever closer to its vision of the entire Bruce Trail secured on permanently protected natural land.

Right now, for example, the BTC is fundraising to create two new nature reserves – Skinner's Woods near Owen Sound, and Lime Kiln Bluffs near Collingwood. Like crucial puzzle pieces, these newly protected areas will ensure the connectivity of habitats for wildlife to thrive. Along with over 12,000 acres already entrusted to the BTC, their unique escarpment ecosystems will be stewarded in perpetuity using best management practices. And along the

Bruce Trail these areas will provide further opportunities for us to explore the escarpment's many riches.

All along the Niagara Escarpment, the Bruce Trail will continue to provide a haven for people and for wildlife, thanks to the thousands of volunteers, members, donors and landowners who make it a reality.

The BTC's mission – Preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever – is made possible through collective effort. We would love for you to join us. To find out more about exploring the Bruce Trail, volunteering, membership, and our latest conservation efforts visit brucetrail.org.

Please watch one of these videos (or both) to see some of this “ribbon of wilderness”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PA6YHJAKX8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0m0dW625f8&t=25s>

CLOSING PRAYER AND SENDING FORTH

Creator of the Earth, you formed us from the stardust of the universe's creation and breathed into us spirit and life. We have a duty to be good stewards of the earth. Grant us wisdom to be better caretakers of the earth's creatures and resources.

Amen.

Liturgy created/adapted by Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, rev-o-lution.org.

GO NOW IN PEACE: Faith video (link takes you to Youtube)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdUap5fcp4k>