Affirming Celebration Service
March 14th, 2021

CREATING SACRED SPACE

Welcome and Acknowledgement of the Land

What a day! Welcome everyone to this time of worship, this time to celebrate!

*Steinbach United has become an Affirming Ministry within the United Church of Canada – and **that** is something worth celebrating! Today is March 14th – PIE day – Public, Intentional and Explicit – and we were very **intentional** in choosing this Sunday for our Celebration Service.*

Thanks for joining us – wherever you are watching from – whether down the street, in a neighbouring community, or across Canada – we appreciate your presence with us for this moment on our journey.

We've had lots of fun preparing the service. Many, many people have been involved! Just a heads up though - we are a congregation that loves to sing - so get ready!

As usual, we begin with the acknowledgement of the land we are on, and the treaties that have shaped and formed who we are. Steinbach United is located on Treaty 1 territory…the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe Swampy Cree and Ojibway people, homeland and heart of the Metis Nation, who, for thousands of years, walked gently on this land with deeply rooted gifts of spirituality, culture, and ways of knowing. We respect the Treaties that were made on these territories, acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past, and give thanks for the stewardship of this land – in times past, and in the present. Today we are called to seek a new relationship as Indigenous and non- Indigenous people, creating one based on friendship, built on respect, and one that produces peace, remembering that we are **all** treaty people.

*So, it doesn't matter who you are, where you come from, who you love, or where you are on your faith journey, know that you are a beloved child of God. You are welcome here! **You belong.***

Lighting of the Christ Candle

*As we light these candles, symbolizing the presence of the sacred in our midst, we do so in solidarity with **all** people and all creation.*

SONG: With a Vision of Hope

By Mary-Ellen Kish

With a vision of hope, we move along
Empowered by faith, we carry on
Reaching out far and wide,
moving forward, reaching high
Filled with hope, filled with dreams,
we journey on.

OPENING STATEMENT

Throughout its history, Steinbach United Church has endeavoured to become a place of belonging, and safety, and service for all. Particularly, for some years now, we have sought to understand the role of gender identity and sexual orientation in human experience and spirituality, and to be more present to that reality in our community. Today we take a moment to mark a milestone on the journey towards inclusion and justice for all in the body of Jesus.

We have been supported by many as we have worked through this process and we are grateful to you all. Specifically, we would like to acknowledge the companionship of Steinbach Neighbours for Community, The Rainbow Resource Centre of Winnipeg, and Affirm United, for their encouragement, education, and guidance, through many years. The journey does not stop here, for always there are new challenges and opportunities, but this is a great place to pause and give thanks.

Through their “faith in action” activities, earlier generations of Steinbach United Church set an example and tone for future generations. We in this day benefit from the “inherited legacy” of those who have gone before. Let’s take a moment to look back and remember some of the other milestones, initiatives, events, memories, that have been part of the process of getting to this place.

MILESTONES ON OUR JOURNEY PRESENTATION

Today we celebrate a significant milestone - the Steinbach United Church becoming an Affirming congregation. What brought us to this moment? Through the years our church has addressed other social justice issues – that's who we are.

If we go back to the end of WWII many returning soldiers were not welcome in their former churches. It was within our church where some of them found a new home.

In 1985 another step on the journey occurred when our church saw a need for a local women's shelter. Agape House began as a joint effort between Steinbach United Church and Niverville United Church.

Close to 40 years ago one of our members saw the effect that food insecurity had on some of our local residents, and he began a food bank, supported by the local Lions Club. In 2008 the food bank had outgrown its rented space. The Steinbach UC became more involved through the sale of the land beside the church and a significant donation from a congregational member both of which helped to make the present South East Helping Hands a reality. Today members of our congregation are very involved. Each year the church grows a community garden and in fall donates the excess produce to the food bank.

The independent living group of enVision Community Living was looking for a place to hold their afternoon coffee times and events and the Steinbach United Church opened the church CE building to them. Congregational members were also instrumental in starting Eden East, Anna's House and most recently the Coalition that is looking to address poverty in our area.

About five years ago a group of Steinbach residents who were concerned about the LGBTQ+ community in our city formed the Steinbach Neighbors for Community, or SNFC. Members of our congregation initiated this group, and the church provides the space for this group to hold their meetings. Both plays and many educational events that followed were well attended by people throughout southeastern Manitoba.

Several years ago, the congregation began to look more closely at making our church more inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community. And so, the Affirming process began. Through the years we have had Sunday services with messages from church members and visiting ministers. Gender equity was a topic presented by representatives from the Rainbow Resource Center in Winnipeg. Bible studies, workshops and conversation circles were held to provide an opportunity for discussion about inclusion, the experiences of the LGBTQ+ within our community, and becoming an Affirming church. We have had movie nights where the movie themes addressed LGBTQ+ issues followed by a time for discussion. Then we made changes to the Baptism, Marriage and Funeral policies so they are inclusive.

In the last few years to increase greater awareness of the Affirming message, and the LGBTQ+ inclusion in all parts of our church life, a second presentation by the Rainbow Resource Center focussed on the use of pronouns as seen through an inclusive lens. Last March as part of the Affirming journey we had a PIE Day – Public-Intentional-Explicit. It was well attended by our congregational members,

and some from neighbouring United Church congregations as well. And we did eat pie! For several years some of our church members have attended and marched in Pride parades in Steinbach and in Morden.

Then last fall, in the midst of COVID-19 and masks and social distancing, we held our vote to decide whether we were ready as a congregation to become an Affirming ministry. The vote was a drive-through type where the ballot was brought out to the car on a hockey stick and the voting was done in our cars. The response was great, and the result led us to this day. Finally, an addition was made to our Statement of Commitment to be more explicit about full inclusion.

As we journey forward as an Affirming congregation, we will continue to focus on social justice issues. One more step along the way.....

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PRESENTATION OF AFFIRM UNITED CERTIFICATE

Hello friends at Steinbach United. I'm Reverend Cole Grambo from Selkirk United church, and I'm thrilled to be part of your Affirming Celebration today. I have been asked to bring greetings on behalf of Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble, and to officially present to you the Affirming Ministry Certificate on their behalf. First let me share a little more about Affirm United – they are a charitable organization of United Church people with three main goals:

1. Education: promoting greater awareness of sexual orientation and gender identity issues.
2. Action/Advocacy: working to end discrimination against people in church, society and our own organization
3. Support: helping people of all sexual orientations and gender identities find support and community within the United Church.

You can find more information on their website if you "Google" Affirm United. Affirm partners with The United Church of Canada to address social issues both within and outside the church.

Affirm's Signature Program is the Affirming Ministry Program which you have just completed at **Steinbach United Church**. We are all very excited that you have made this commitment to be an Affirming Ministry. Together, with all the other Affirming churches across the province and across the country, you are working to forward our goals of education, action, and support, and are helping to create a church and a world where all are loved, accepted, affirmed, and welcomed as part of the family. Now, it is my honour to present this certificate to you. Let me read it out to you:

Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble is pleased to recognize Steinbach United Church, Steinbach, Manitoba, as an Affirming Ministry within the United Church of Canada. We acknowledge that this Community of Faith has completed the Affirming Ministry Educational Program and has issued a Statement of Faith and Action which welcomes people of all sexual orientations and gender identities into every aspect of their life and work.

Here you go. Congratulations and blessings as you journey on - seeking justice and hospitality for all! God bless! Celebrate well.

SONG: MV 23 Come O Holy Spirit

Words: Fred Kaan *Music: Ron Klusmeier*

Come, O Holy Spirit, set the church on fire;
strike it as the lightning hits a posing spire.
Burn away the structures and consume the sham
of our holy systems:
Come, in Jesus name!

Come, come, come in Jesus name!
Take our hearts by storm.
All the world lies o-pen:
Pentecost is now!
I said a …
Come, come, come in Jesus name!
Take our hearts by storm.
All the world lies o-pen:
Pentecost is now!

Blow away the cobwebs of our stubborn past.
Come, send flying from us myths unfit to last.
Wind of change, refresh us and disturb our calm;
teach us what true love is, take our hearts by storm.

Come, come, come in Jesus name!
Take our hearts by storm.
All the world lies o-pen:

Pentecost is now!
I said a …
Come, come, come in Jesus name!
Take our hearts by storm.
All the world lies o-pen:
Pentecost is now!
Free us from the babble of our Babel mind;
spark in us a language all can understand.
Lighten then our darkness, come and show us how
all the world lies o-pen:
Pentecost is now!

Come, come, come in Jesus name!
Take our hearts by storm.
All the world lies o-pen:
Pentecost is now!
I said a …
Come, come, come
in Jesus name!
Take our hearts by storm.
All the world lies o-pen:
Pentecost is now!
Amen!

GREETINGS:

Prairie to Pine

Good Morning to All of you at Steinbach United Church. I'm Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister, and I'm pleased to bring greetings on behalf of the Executive and Staff of Prairie to Pine Regional Council.

I'm so glad that I have this opportunity to congratulate you on becoming an Affirming congregation. Your commitment to being a safe nurturing environment where you accept, respect, welcome and include all persons of any age, colour, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, marital status, social or economic circumstance in all aspects of your ministry is a beautiful image of what a church can be.

As you celebrate both PIE Day and becoming an Affirming congregation, the regional council congratulates you on your hard work to get here and celebrates with you! I know this took a lot of volunteer hours and commitment to learn and grow from all members of your congregation as well as your Affirming committee. I commend you and send heartfelt thanks for your dedication to being Affirming.

Congratulations again and celebrate well! I wish we could do this in person because I know there would have been cake, but maybe we can do that on the 1st anniversary! Blessings on your Lenten journey and congratulations!

Niverville United Church
Hello everyone. My name is Roxanne and I am here on behalf of Niverville United Church. It is with joy we at Niverville greet and congratulate Steinbach United Church on "coming out" as an Affirming congregation in the United Church of Canada. To include all peoples in your community of faith and outreach, including 2SLGBTQ+ (2 Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Queer plus).

Today we rejoice with you in your proclaimed commitment to celebrate and honour all people. As you intentionally show unconditional love without judgement to all humanity.

Steinbach United Church, may you continue to be a blessing to others and may you find yourself blessed in your growth as people of God.

Selkirk United Church
Dozens of images of members of Selkirk United Church on a Zoom call are shown on the screen.

Hello to all of our friends at Steinbach United from all of us at Selkirk United. We all got together to send you some greetings. Well, also because it's our Annual Meeting today, but mostly so we could send greetings to you and our congratulations as you officially become an Affirming Ministry! I understand that you are the 25th Affirming Ministry in Manitoba and the 239th Affirming Ministry in Canada. So welcome to the club! It is a really great group. God bless you for taking this important journey and for all the good work along the way. So, from our community of faith to yours, blessings.

Everyone in unison speaks, holding up rainbow flags, candles, etc.:
Congratulations!

SONG: VU 138 My Love Colours Outside the Lines

by Gordon Light

My love colours outside the lines,
exploring paths that few could ever find;
and takes me into places where I've never been before,
and opens doors to worlds outside the lines.

My Lord colours outside the lines,
turns wounds to blessings, water into wine;

and takes me into places where I've never been before
and opens doors to worlds outside the lines.

We'll never walk on water if we're not prepared to drown,
body and soul need a soaking from time to time.
And we'll never move the gravestones if we're not prepared to die,
and realize there are worlds outside the lines.

My soul longs to colour outside the lines,
tear back the curtains, sun, come in and shine;
I want to walk beyond the boundaries where I've never been before,
throw open doors to worlds outside the lines.

We'll never walk on water if we're not prepared to drown,
body and soul need a soaking from time to time.
And we'll never move the gravestones if we're not prepared to die,
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SCRIPTURE READINGS

Hebrews 3:1-2

Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house.

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are

indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

REFLECTION

Greetings – it's so great to be celebrating with you today! My name is Deborah Vitt. I am a United Church minister and a longtime friend of this community of faith. How exciting and how amazingly wonderful to celebrate with all of you this day! Steinbach United Church is the 25th community of faith in our region to be recognized with this designation. You have done your work and you are committed to the ongoing work and ministry presence that is part of living into what it means to be an Affirming Community of faith!! Good on you – grace and peace to you! And if there had been people here to dance with – we might have done just that but for today I will join your friends from Selkirk United and hold up my rainbow and keep smiling.

I looked back in my notes from 2015 and it was November of that year when Donna Clouston and I from Selkirk United as well as our daughter Kathleen Vitt, were invited here to share personal experiences and faith stories on a Sunday morning. That was 5.5 years ago…the time has flown and like I said, since then you have been steadfast in your commitment to learning and growing into what it means to be an Affirming Congregation. They both send their greetings and just as an aside…Kathleen and her wife Clare welcomed their son Felix in the summer of 2019 so now our other grandson Isaac has a cousin to play with!!

Today Steinbach United has joined with 239 other communities of faith in the United Church of Canada who have prayerfully and diligently come to proclaim explicitly that all are welcome in this place.

Who knew you would be celebrating in the time of a global pandemic! Cause I know it is just weird to have such a celebration and not be together, having a colourful rainbow filled party, sharing hugs and high fives and of course gathering around the table to share in good food. Really good food!! And desserts – and maybe some Pie…why pie you might ask?

Because today, March 14th, is PIE day…no it is not a nod to pastry week on the Great Canadian Baking Show, and while it does have a tie in to the math symbol of pi – which is 3.14, when the United Church talks about PIE – it is an acronym. P.I.E.: Public, Intentional Explicit.

These are the standards we hold ourselves and our welcome to when we become affirming, welcoming and inclusive communities. So today we would have served up a rainbow of pie flavours in celebration of being Public, Intentional and Explicit. These pies would become a diverse symbol of our actions as today we celebrate the full inclusion of LGBTQIA+ and Two Spirit people in this faith community and beyond across Canada.

Our moderator Richard Bott recently penned these words: being public, intentional and explicit are truly the standards for real and radical welcome. In our faith tradition we might say PIE is prophetic news, gospel news, good news for all Christian communities to share: we are beloved of God and a celebrated part of this community of faith.

Steinbach United has taken the steps outlined in a process that enabled you to go from assuming you were welcoming to becoming intentional about being welcoming. We know churches have not always been places of safety or welcome to those who identify as anything other than being straight. This United Church of ours has its own painful story of what it takes to become fully welcoming to all persons in membership, regardless of their sexuality or gender expression. And yet in 1988 as a national body we proclaimed publicly and intentionally that all persons are welcome. And now on this March 14th, 2021, Steinbach United has publicly voted yes – as this community of faith commits to full inclusion and welcome of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, marginalized, intersex, queer, two spirit and persons with diverse expressions of sexuality – you have faithfully chosen to create safe space where persons can be their true selves.

As the worship team and I worked together to create this service of celebration, we talked about scripture and where the Spirit was guiding us. Of course, we are called to love one another as God has loved us. And of course, we are all welcome in the shelter of God's wing. Just as we are all one body in Christ.

A body that has many parts, limbs, organs, and cells but no matter how many parts you can name, we are all still one body. Using the Message translation of parts of the 12th chapter of 1 Corinthians:

> A body is not just a single part blown up into something huge. It's all the different but similar parts arranged and functioning together. The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't, the parts we see and the parts we don't. If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt

and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance.

Friends, today you have chosen to publicly create a sense of community that says you are fellow travelers on the journey with those who have not always been welcome. This will not always be a walk in the park. You have likely discovered that already. There will be those who will say you are not following God's call. There will likely be those who will be angry for what you have prayerfully, faithfully and diligently come to discern. Remember you are not alone. We are here to help each other – as the hymn we love to sing – we are here to walk the mile and bear the load. You have each other. You have a history of social justice activism in this community as shown in the video montage from earlier in this service. And you have your faith in a God that assures us we are not alone. We live in God's world.

Steinbach United has made the commitment to creating and provide a safe space, making sure the circle of God's love is vast and wide and that no one is left outside. The rainbow of diversity will continue to add to this body of Christ as you bear witness, as you welcome, as you continue to celebrate and offer a taste of what it is to be authentically affirming.

In these unprecedented Covid times, you might wonder how you will share your story with the wider community. This is where the intentional and explicit parts of the PIE can come in. Your website, your letterhead, your blog, your building - can express who you are, and you can share your faith commitment even if you can't yet physically open your doors. Trust me, that rainbow is a sign and a symbol of welcome and when it is woven together with the United Church crest and is made visible – people will see, and they will wonder, and they will likely check you out in some way, shape or form.

This morning we also heard a verse from Hebrews about the gift of hospitality. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for some have entertained angels without knowing it.

The gift of welcome does not come with a preamble – a caveat – a list of who is in and who is out. I can't guarantee that your doors will be flooded with members of the queer community and their allies, but I do know, word will get out. You have made a commitment to be Public, to be Intentional and to be Explicit. And your extension of God's welcome will be felt in this community.

Blessings on your journey friends. Blessings on your ministry. Blessings on your witness. Blessings as you continue to joyfully proclaim that all are welcome – all are welcome in this place. May it be so.

SONG: MV 145 Draw the Circle Wide

by Gordon Light

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.

God the still-point of the circle, 'round whom all creation turns:
nothing lost, but held forever, in God's gracious arms.

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.

Let our hearts touch far horizons, so encompass great and small:
let our loving know no borders, faithful to God's call.

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.

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

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.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Inclusive, compassionate, and spiritual – that's Steinbach United!
These are the pillars upon which we stand, by which we measure who we are, and what we do.

Through months of sharing our stories in conversation circles, workshops, and gatherings, our community of faith confirmed these three pillars, and went on to create the first three lines of the Statement of Commitment that guides us.

So, the core affirming values were already embedded in our Statement of Commitment. As an Affirm Team we just needed to tweak it a little here and there, so it explicitly included ALL people. . . .
From the voices of many, we speak with one voice.

Statement of Commitment

"Moved by an ever-changing spirit,
we will live our lives as followers of Jesus and
affirm our trust in God's love to all people,
providing a safe, nurturing environment where we accept, respect, welcome and include all persons of any age, colour, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, marital status,
social or economic circumstance
in all aspects of our ministry."

GREETINGS:

Mayor Earl Funk

Hi, my name is Earl Funk and I'm the Mayor of Steinbach. It is my pleasure and honor to be here today to help celebrate with the United Church this special moment in their church history.

You know I am so thankful for all the churches that are in Steinbach. They do such a great job as they minister to our community and help out our community. They are Jesus with skin in our community and I am so thankful for the churches that we have.

Church was always a very, very important part of my life growing up and I was a bit of a rambunctious boy and you know bedtimes were kind of… they were difficult. So, my dad would often help my mom put all us kids to bed, my siblings and myself. He would often take me, and I think sometimes my dad would spend his quiet time with God with me. Because lots of times we didn't necessarily read bedtime stories, we read Bible stories and he read the Bible to me. And I remember one time in particular, I might have been six or might have been seven. I was young, very tender.

He was reading to me out of Matthew. Matthew 22:37. This is right where the Pharisees have asked Jesus what is the greatest commandment of all and he said, to love the lord your God with all your heart soul and mind. And then he said the second one is very much like it, to love your neighbor as yourself. Then he said all the other commandments and laws hang over these two.

My Dad spent a lot of time with me that evening talking about love. And asking me – do you love everyone? I said Of Course! I said yes. I was a young boy I said yes. But I realized what love is a as I grew up. As I started to make friends, as got married and I had children, started a business, got involved in the community. That's when I saw what real love is and real love is not always just …softness. Sometimes it's difficult.

But real love is loving everyone in every circumstance in every time and that is what is important and that's what we need to remember. And I believe that is what churches do. Churches love everyone in every circumstance, in every time of their life.

I am so, so excited to be here today and I want to encourage the United Church to continue in the good work they do. Thank you very much.

Kyle Penner – Grace Mennonite Church
Hello, Steinbach United Church! My name is Kyle Penner, one of the pastors at Grace Mennonite Church down the road.

I was recently informed of your vote to become an openly affirming church and I just want to say WAY TO GO!
Many years ago, it seems you asked me to be a part of a conversation about how this was rolling for Grace Mennonite Church and to know that there are two churches in Steinbach who are faithfully working at this gives me great hope.
I am reminded of a quote from the author Rachel Held Evans. She said "I thought God wanted to use me to show gay people how to be straight. Instead, God used gay people to show me how to be Christian." And I think that embodies much about the journey that many of us are on.

So WAY TO GO! I know it's hard to celebrate in pandemic times but in whatever ways you can do celebrate the momentous occasion.

Steinbach Neighbours for Community
Donna: Hi, I'm Donna Snider, and I'm part of *Steinbach Neighbours for Community*!
Darren: And I'm Darren.
Val: And I'm Val.
Kristy: And I'm Kristy.
Scott: And I'm Scott.
Dana: And I'm Dana.
Dana: We are all so pleased that we could be part of your service today.
Val: because today you are celebrating a historic moment in the history of Steinbach!
Dana: because you are the FIRST church in Steinbach to formally declare as an Affirming Church! We were so excited to hear about your overwhelming vote to fully celebrate and honor inclusion of LGBTTQIA people. We had the pleasure of speaking to your congregation about *Steinbach Neighbours for Community* a few years ago. You welcomed us with open arms that day as we told you about our desire to promote understanding and acceptance of the diversity in our

community. It was a breath of fresh air to be able to stand in your church and speak of our shared desire to support our LGBTTQIA neighbours.
Donna: What you have accomplished is really amazing!
Val: We admire your public affirmation and commitment to be a safe place for people of all sexual identities and orientations. We are grateful for your advocacy for, and ministry to, those who feel marginalized, unheard and unwelcomed in other churches.
Dana: You are creating a home, a place of welcome, for LGBTTQIA people who are longing for a spiritual home where they can love God, serve others and be their authentic selves because Steinbach United celebrates the diversity of God's creation.
Darren: Thank you for affirming the sacred truth of the diversity of God's creation.
Val: Our community is richer, and stronger, and safer for everyone who lives, works, and prays here – because of you.
Kristy: As allies of the LGBTTQIA community, *Steinbach Neighbours for Community* is grateful for your commitment toward justice and equality for all.
Dana: We know that this was quite a process for your church, and that it took time, many conversations, and courage to arrive where you are today.
Val: Please know that your courage and compassion is a blessing to those who need to hear that they are loved and valued just the way they are – and that's all of us!
Dana: Diversity may be the hardest thing for a society to live with, but perhaps it's the most dangerous thing for a society to live without.
Darren: blessings to you!
Scott: We are proud of you!
Dana: Thank-you Steinbach United!
Kristy: Way to go!
Val: So, whoohoo! Way to go Steinbach United!!

OFFERING

Whoever we are, wherever we are, we are blessed and gifted.
May the gifts we are, and the gifts we bring be shared and make the world richer!

Let's pray:
Spirit of openness and affirmation,
We dedicate these gifts to the ministry of love and acceptance in the world.
May we ever seek to use all of our resources to create a world and a church where all are welcomed and honoured, loved and fully known. This we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

SONG: MV 191 What Can I Do?

Words and music: Paul Rumboldt and Michele McCarthy

What can I do? What can I bring?
What can I say? What can I sing?
I'll sing with joy. I'll say a prayer.
I'll bring my love. I'll do my share.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Holy One, we give you thanks for the leadership of forebears who pioneered the way of inclusive community, who lived so that no one would be excluded, or ignored, or left behind.

We give thanks for the pushing and prodding from those on the edges, prophets, and teachers, Jesus, and John the Baptist, those who will not be ignored, and those who will not let us forget.
And we give thanks for the companions that walk with us today who inspire us with courage, who pool their wisdom, and challenge us to love more, to live fully and to embrace the world in our care.

Today we hold in our hearts those who still live on the edges, whose community is fragile, who pour everything into resilience, and who depend on you for everything.

We think of seniors disconnected from family; we think of those without permanent home; we think of those with sporadic income who struggle to live.

We pray for the right of those of every sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity, to live freely and with dignity, and respect.

We pray that we might continue the work of removing boundaries and barriers, of caring for all creation, and celebrating your spirit wherever it moves.

We pray in Jesus' name who teaches disciples to pray together:
Our Father-Mother, who is in the heavens,
May your name be made holy,
May your dominion come'
May your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today the bread we need;
And forgive us our debts,
As we have forgiven our debtors;
And do not put us to the test,

But rescue us from evil,
For yours is the dominion, and the power,
And the glory forever.
Amen.

SONG: VU 639 One More Step

Words and Music: Sydney Carter

One more step along the world I go,
one more step along the world I go,
from the old things to the new,
keep me travelling along with you:
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me traveling along with you.

Round the corner of the world I turn,
more and more about the world I learn,
all the new things that I see
you'll be looking at along with me:
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me traveling along with you.

Give me courage when the world is rough,
keep me loving though the world is tough,
leap and sing in all I do.
keep me travelling along with you:
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me traveling along with you.

BLESSING

Let us go in the Peace of Christ,
To love and serve in the community and in the world.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in the world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done to bring justice and kindness to all our children, to all in need. Amen.

CANDLE LIGHTING MONTAGE

A series of images of congregants lighting candles at home appear in succession on the screen. The collection of images parts at the end to reveal the Affirm candle lit at the church in the centre.

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Valid for: 04/28/2020 – 04/27/2021

Thanks for your participation in our service of celebration!

Cole Grambo, Selkirk United Church

Shannon McCarthy, Prairie to Pine Region

Roxanne Anderson, Niverville United Church

Members of Selkirk United Church

Deborah Vitt

Mayor Earl Funk, Steinbach

Kyle Penner, Grace Mennonite Church, Steinbach

Steinbach Neighbours For Community

Special thanks to so many people from our own community of faith!

WAYS TO GIVE:

Offerings can be sent via cheque or cash to 541 Main Street, Steinbach MB R5G 0L5. Please feel free to email steinbachunited@mymts.net or call 204-326-3713 for further offering options, including PAR and e-transfers.