

# **RiverRunning: An Intercultural Conference**

## **Worship Sunday, November 22, 2009**

**Song: “River of Life” (MV160)**

**Song: “Water Flowing from the Mountains” (MV 87)**

**Song: “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying” (VU 400)**

### **Call to Worship**

#### **Call to Worship:**

One: Out of many waters, we gather as people of one God.

**All: Flowing, changing, led by the Spirit, we give thanks for the River of Life.**

One: Within diverse waters, we are reformed and reborn.

**All: Dancing, signing, led by the Spirit, we give thanks for the River of Life.**

One: Connected by sweet waters, we are loved into new ways of being.

**All: Compelling, transforming, led by the Spirit, we give thanks for the River of Life.  
Come, let us worship our Creator.**

### **Our Covenant as God’s Diverse Church**

**Keynote: Laura Mariko Cheifetz**

**Song: “Behold: One Another”**

**Song: “Behold, Behold, I Make All Things New” (MV 115)**

**Song: “Like a Healing Stream” (MV 144)**

**Song: “River Running in You and Me” (MV 163)**

### **Reflection**

On Friday, you were offered a gift. You were invited to take a stone, a stone which came from the bottom of a river, a river which brings creation to life. You were invited to carry this stone with you—a symbol of the River of Life—as you reflected, prayed, sang, listened, and spoke over the past few days.

This stone has been your companion of the journey.

Your stone is a gift from the river—as all of creation is a gift; and as we are to one another.

We are never in absolute possession of the gifts we receive from Creator. The power of Almighty Love to welcome us, heal us, re-imagine and transform us, is pure grace—pure gift.

In the same way, the stories our companion stones now hold—the prayers, laments, hopes, and visions they bear—are stories that tell of our personal pilgrimage over the last few days, yet they are not the whole story.

In intercultural community, we know that no one person holds the whole story. We all have pieces of the story, and we all see things in different ways. It is only when they return together, that the wisdom of the blessed community awakens.

Let us return Creator's gifts to the waters. Let us gather the wisdom that flows through us, is from us—but not from us.

Come and bring your stone back to the waters, to this River of Life.

*(The people come forward and return their stones to the worship table at the centre of the circle.)*

## **Testimony Time / Listening to the Spirit**

### **Scripture Reading**

- Revelation 22:1–5 (English)

### **Reflection**

The River of Life flows from the throne of God into the middle of the street of the city, along the banks of community. The river nourishes the Tree of Life with fruit and leaves for the nourishing and healing of we, the peoples.

God keeps the waters moving.

Nations come together and God swirls.

God cascades, and agitates the water: stagnant eddies begin to freshen, and apathetic pools begin to stir.

As the old swirls with the new: Community! Wisdom! Hope! Revelation!

*(Water is poured over the stones.)*

Come and take another stone from the river. Remember the stories that were told in this space. Remember that you will now carry some of these stories as you leave this place.

*(The people come and take a stone from the worship table.)*

**Song: “Jesus, Your Spirit in Us” (MV 102)**

**Invitation into Silence**

**Silent Reflection**

**Song: “Jesus, Your Spirit in Us” (MV 102)**

**A New Creed**

**Reflection**

As we gather around this table of holy sacrament, we are accepted for who we are—without condition, without condemnation, with nothing but grace.

Here in this upper room on the banks of two rivers flowing through the city of a million trees, we accept our own stories and we accept the stories of our neighbour—without condition, without condemnation. With nothing but grace do we receive each others’ stories of sorrow and joy, brokenness and strength. We are *not* a perfect people, but we are a *loved* people.

*(People are invited to squeeze their stones.)*

Hold your stone tightly, as if your life depended on it, and listen. Hear your story; hear your neighbour’s story; hear Christ’s story; hear Creator’s story; hear the prayerful murmuring of the River of Life.

**Communion**

The use of smoked fish in our communion service this morning helps to connect us to the living waters of the earth, and to the living communities of First Peoples in Manitoba whom the fish have sustained since the beginning of time. The smoked fish also connects us with the first Christians who used the symbol of the fish <>> to secretly identify themselves as followers of Jesus in a time of severe persecution. They used this symbol because it signified the One to whom they bore ultimate allegiance. The first letters from each of the words in the Greek phrase “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour” form the acrostic: ICTHYS. This is the Greek word for “fish.” As we partake of the smoked fish, or of the bread, we are connected to God’s good earth, our ancient peoples, our Christian story, and to the child born of the River of Life who said, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

**Song of Invitation: “Here, O God, Your Servants Gather/  
Se-ka-i no To-mo to Te o Tsu-na-gi” (VU 362)**

One: When the time was right, Creator sent the Beloved,  
and filled him with the River of Life.

One: Newly born from Mary's inward sea,  
Jesus drank deeply from his mother's milk, and her rebel's song:

One: "My soul magnifies the Lord, ...[for God] has brought down the powerful  
from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly." (Luke 1:46-52)

**All: And great was the flowing of the River of Life, and great the filling!**

One: Deep in the streams of the Jordan, he was baptized to the bone in love and blessing:

One: "This is my...Beloved, with whom I am pleased." (Matthew 3:17)

**All: And great was the flowing of the River of Life, and great the filling!**

One: In need of still waters by which to rest his weary feet, his soul is restored  
by a woman's tears in an anointing of gratitude and beauty.

**All: And great was the flowing of the River of Life, and great the filling!**

**Sung Sanctus: "Hamba nathi/You Are Holy" (MV 45)**

One: On the night before he died,  
Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks to God,  
He broke it, and gave it to those who sat with him, saying:  
"Take, eat.  
This is my body, given for you.  
Each time you do this, remember me."  
In the same way he took the cup, saying:  
"Drink. This cup is the promise of God, made in my blood.  
Each time you drink from this cup, remember me."

**All: From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.**

One: Unexpectedly, Jesus got up from the table in the upper room,  
took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself.  
Then he poured water into a basin and washed his disciples' feet.

**All: From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.**

One: Pouring out his soul, he prayed for us.  
He prayed that we might become one heart—just as he was one with God;  
and that his joy might find its completion in us.

**All: From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.**

One: And this is the testimony of one who saw:  
that when the Roman soldier pierced Jesus' side after he had died on the cross,  
blood and water flowed forth!

**All: From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.**

One: After his resurrection, Jesus showed himself to the disciples as they fished on the Sea of Tiberius.

One: He stood on the beach just after daybreak; but the disciples did not recognize him. Jesus said to them, “You have no fish have you?” “No.” they replied. He said to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish.

One: And the disciple whom Jesus loved exclaimed, “It is the Lord!”

**All: From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.**

**Sung Alleluia: “Alleluia (Monteiro)” (MV 54)**

**The Lord’s Prayer**

**Prayer of Consecration and Transformation**

**All: Holy God, pour your Spirit on us, and on these our gifts,  
that we might be united at this table with Christ’s mystical body.  
Make us, while many, one.  
Make us, though broken, whole.  
Make us, despite death, a resurrection people.  
Send forth your River of Life into the whole earth,  
And feed all your creatures from the sacred Tree  
for the healing of heaven and earth. Amen.**

**The Breaking and the Pouring**

One: This is the body of Christ, hewn from the Tree of Life.  
This is the blood of Christ, wellspring of the River of Life.

**The Distribution**

**Song: “To the Thirsty I Will Give Water”**

**Song: “Jesus, We Are Here/Jesu tawa pano” (MV 189)**

**Prayers of Thanks for God’s Blessings**

**Song: “I See a New Heaven” (VU 713)**

**Sung Amen: “Ameni” (MV 219)**

**Thank You's (with sung amen after each thank you)**

- Keynote Speakers
- The 40th Moderator of The United Church of Canada
- RiverRunning Design Team
- Workshop Leaders
- Chaplains
- RiverRunning Administrative Support Staff
- Participants in “More Healing than Eden: Shoreline Songs of a Storied Creation”
- Musicians
- RiverRunning Event Partners
- American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters
- Dancers
- Volunteer Helpers
- United Church Distribution Centre (UCRD) Book Table
- Thanks be to God!

**Benediction**

*—Adele Halliday and Steve Willey, Intercultural and Diverse Communities in Ministry,  
The United Church of Canada*