

**THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA  
FIRST DAWN EASTERN EDGE REGIONAL COUNCIL**

**Affirming Celebration**



**President**

The Rev. Elsie M. Squires

**Executive Minister**

The Rev. E. V. Faith March-MacCuish

**Regional Council Affirm Chair**

The Rev. James Ravenscroft

**Preacher**

The Rev. Grant Stuckless

**Host Ministers & Congregations**

The Rev. Deepak Khristi

*Carol United Church, Labrador City*

The Rev. Kimberley Waite

*Memorial United Church, Grand Falls-Windsor*

The Rev. James Ravenscroft

*St. James United Church, St. John's*

**Sunday, May 3, 2026 at 1:00 pm**

## **A Note About Today's Service**

Today we gather to celebrate an important and hope-filled moment in the life of our church as First Dawn Eastern Edge officially becomes an Affirming Regional Council. Together, we are publicly committing ourselves to be a community where people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions are fully welcomed, valued, and celebrated.

The shape of this service reflects that commitment.

Our worship draws on the deep well of Scripture: stories of liberation, courage, and new life. We are guided by the prophetic call to “do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God,” and by Jesus’ witness to a love that reaches across every boundary and holds all people close.

Our Psalm today, Psalm 100, reminds us of a simple and powerful truth: “It is God who made us, and we belong to God.” This promise grounds everything we do. Every person, without exception, is created by God, claimed by God, and held in God’s enduring love.

In the Gospel story (Matthew 14:22–33), Peter steps out onto the water toward Jesus. When fear overtakes him and he begins to sink, Jesus reaches out and lifts him up. This story speaks deeply to our life together as a church. There have been times when we have faltered, times when we have not lived up to God’s call to love and inclusion. Yet Christ continues to reach out to us, to lift us, and to lead us forward into a better way. Again and again, we are given new life and new possibilities.

The hymns we sing echo this good news. As we begin our worship the historic words of “All People That on Earth Do Dwell,” reaffirm for us that God claims *all* of us, and God’s tender care for us will never fade. This promise stands “at all times firmly stood, and shall from age to age endure.” As we conclude, “Draw the Circle Wide” sends us forth with a commitment for us to continue striving toward the unconditional and unending love of our God.

Today is both a celebration and a commitment: a celebration of how far we have come, and a commitment to continue growing into the welcoming, loving, and justice-seeking community God calls us to be. We give thanks that we do not walk this journey alone.

# **Gathering**

*Memorial United Church, Grand Falls-Windsor  
St. James' United Church, St. John's*

## **PRELUDE**

## **PROCESSIONAL HYMN: "ALL PEOPLE THAT ON EARTH DO DWELL" VOICES UNITED #822**

All people that on earth do dwell,  
sing out your faith with cheerful voice;  
delight in God whose praise you tell,  
whose presence calls you to rejoice.

Know that there is one God, indeed,  
who fashions us without our aid,  
who claims us, gives us all we need,  
whose tender care will never fade.

Enter the sacred gates with praise;  
with joy approach the temple walls.  
Extol and bless our God always  
as people whom the Spirit calls.

Proclaim again that God is good,  
whose mercy is forever sure,  
whose truth at all times firmly stood,  
and shall from age to age endure.

## **WELCOME**

*The Rev. Elsie Squires, President*

## **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

*The Rev. Kimberley Waite, Minister, Memorial United Church*

## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

*The Rev. Faith March-MacCuish, Executive Minister  
The Rev. Kimberley Waite, Minister, Memorial United Church  
Youth @ Region Participant*

**CALL TO WORSHIP:**            *Led by participants from Youth @ Region*

We gather today in celebration,  
affirming the goodness and worth of all God's people.

**We celebrate the gift of life, in all its diversity and beauty.**  
*(red candle is lit)*

We come as those created by God:  
known, knit together, and deeply loved.

**We are God's people, and we belong to God.**  
*(green candle is lit)*

We gather with honesty, aware of the pain many have carried.

**We open ourselves to the healing  
that comes through love and welcome.**  
*(orange candle is lit)*

We gather seeking courage:  
to step out in faith, even when the waters are uncertain.

**Christ meets us there,  
lifting us up and calling us together in peace and harmony.**  
*(blue candle is lit)*

So come, you who are fearfully and wonderfully made.

**Come, and shine with the light  
that God has planted in every heart.**  
*(yellow candle is lit)*

Come and worship the One whose steadfast love endures.

**We worship the one who upholds us in grace.**  
*(purple candle is lit)*

We are many, yet we are one.

**We are one body, a rainbow of hope in the world!**

**OPENING PRAYER:**            *Led by participants from Youth @ Region*

Let us pray . . .

**Faithful and loving God,  
you have made us, and we are yours.  
You gather us from many places, with many stories,  
into one community of grace.**

**On this day of celebration, pour out your Spirit upon us:  
that we may rejoice in your goodness, trust in your  
mercy,  
and walk boldly in your way.  
When we are fearful, give us courage.  
When we falter, reach out your hand.  
When we lose our way, call us back to you.  
Shape us into a people who live justly, love tenderly,  
and walk humbly with you.  
Through Jesus Christ, who meets us on the waters and  
calls us into life, we pray. Amen.**

**SUNG RESPONSE: “THERE IS ROOM FOR ALL” MORE VOICES #62**

There is room for all in the shadow of God’s wing;  
There is room for all, sheltered in God’s love,  
And I rejoice and sing, “My refuge and my rock in whom I trust.”  
There is room for all, there is room for all.

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION:** *Cynthia Burt, Affirm Committee FDEE*  
*The Rev. James Ravenscroft, FDEE Affirm Chair FDEE*

Let us pray . . .

**Gracious and holy God,  
you have created us in your image  
and called us to love one another  
as you have loved us.  
Yet we confess that we have not always been  
a welcoming people.  
We have drawn lines where you have made none.  
We have excluded those whom you call beloved.  
We have been silent when we should have spoken,  
and hesitant when you called us to courage.  
Forgive us, we pray.  
Heal the wounds we have caused.  
Transform our hearts and minds.  
Lead us beyond fear into love,  
beyond judgment into grace,  
beyond exclusion into radical welcome.**

**Make us into the church you are calling us to be:  
a community where all are truly seen,  
honoured, and celebrated.**

**Through Jesus Christ, who lifts us when we sink. Amen.**

**WORDS OF FORGIVENESS:**            *The Rev. Elsie Squires, President*

My friends, hear the Good News:

God forgives. God reconciles. God transforms.

This is the wondrous power of God's grace:  
a grace that meets us in our weakness,  
lifts us in our failing, and calls us into new life.

In Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

In Jesus Christ, we are made one.

As a forgiven and forgiving community,  
may this grace continue to transform us through  
healing and justice, reconciliation and love.

**Thanks be to God! Alleluia!**

**SUNG RESPONSE: "THERE IS ROOM FOR ALL" MORE VOICES #62**

There is room for all in the shadow of God's wing;

There is room for all, sheltered in God's love,

And I rejoice and sing, "My refuge and my rock in whom I trust."

There is room for all, there is room for all.

## **Word**

*Carol United Church, Labrador City*

**PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION**

*The Rev. Deepak Khristi, Minister, Carol United Church*

Let us pray . . .

**Living God,**

**your Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.**

**As we hear the Scriptures read and proclaimed,**

**open our hearts and minds**

**that we may recognize your voice,**

**trust your call, and follow where you lead.**

**When the waters feel uncertain,  
give us faith to step forward.  
When we begin to sink, remind us that Christ is near.  
Speak to us, that we may be shaped into your people.  
Through Jesus Christ, the Living Word. Amen.**

**SCRIPTURE READING: ISAIAH 43:1-7**

**Reader:** The grass withers and the flower fades,  
**People:** but the Word of our God shall stand forever.

**SUNG PSALM: PSALM 100: "MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE!"  
VOICES UNITED #820**

**Make a joyful noise all the earth!  
Worship your God with gladness.  
Make a joyful noise all the earth.  
Come to this place with a song!**

Know that your God has made you.  
Know it's to God we belong.  
And come to this place with joyfulness and praise.  
Worship your God with a song! **R**

Enter these gates, thanks giving.  
Enter these courts with praise.  
Sing thanks to your God and bless the holy Name.  
Worship your God with a song! **R**

Ages through endless ages,  
seasons of endless years,  
the love of our Maker ever shall endure.  
Worship your God with a song! **R**

**GOSPEL READING: MATTHEW 14:22-33**

**Reader:** The Gospel of Christ.  
**People:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**SERMON** *The Rev. Grant Stuckless*

**HYMN: “MY LOVE COLOURS OUTSIDE THE LINES”**

**MORE VOICES #138**

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,  
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.

## **Celebrating**

*Memorial United Church, Grand-Falls Windsor*

### **AFFIRMING OUR CALL**

*The Rev. Faith March-MacCuish, Executive Minister*

**With joy in our hearts and a song on our lips,  
we, the First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council  
of The United Church of Canada,  
are called by God to dare to love and serve people  
of all racial backgrounds, creeds, ages,  
cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, gender expressions,  
economic statuses, abilities or any other lived experiences  
that have led to marginalization and oppression.**

**We believe that full participation in all aspects of our calling  
to be bold disciples of Jesus Christ is the right of all peoples.**

**Through our various shared ministries  
and paths of deep spirituality,  
we are called to uphold the varied gifts and skills in each other;  
to be accepting of change  
while honouring heritage and traditions;  
to seek justice and resist bias and through all of this,  
to know that we are not alone.**

**We are all God's children. Thanks be to God!**

### **GREETINGS FROM AFFIRM UNITED**

*The Rev. Ruth Noble, Executive Director, Affirm United*

### **PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATE**

*The Rev. Linton Worrall, Affirm Chair  
Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Council*

*(received by representatives of Youth @ Region  
& the Rev. Faith March-MacCuish)*

### **LIGHTING OF THE RAINBOW CANDLE**

The light of Christ shines brightly for all God's children!

**Thanks be to God! Alleluia!**

**HYMN:**

**“JESUS LOVES ME” VOICES UNITED #365**

Jesus loves me, this I know,  
for the Bible tells me so;  
little ones to him belong,  
in his love we shall be strong.  
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!  
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me, this I know,  
as he loved so long ago,  
taking children on his knee,  
saying, 'Let them come to me.'  
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!  
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me still today,  
walking with me on my way,  
wanting as a friend to give  
light and love to all who live.  
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!  
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

**Response**

*Carol United Church, Labrador City*

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

*The Rev. Deepak Khristi, Minister  
& Members of Carol United Church*

**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.**

**ANTHEM**

**“We Are a Rainbow”** *Carol United Church Choir*

## **Reaffirming**

*St. James' United Church, St. John's*

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**                      *The Rev. Elsie Squires, President*

### **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING OVER THE WATER**

*The Rev. Elsie Squires, President*

*As the President gives God thanks for the gift of water  
which renews and refreshes us,  
water is poured in each of the in-person worship sites.  
Those of you worshipping at home are also invited  
to give God thanks for waters of our baptism.*

**REMEMBERING OUR BAPTISM**                      *The Rev. Elsie Squires, President*

### **SUNG RESPONSE: "LOVE LIFTED ME" (CHORUS)**

#### **SONGS OF THE GOSPEL #25**

**Love lifted me! Love lifted me!  
When nothing else could help, love lifted me!  
Love lifted me! Love lifted me!  
When nothing else could help, love lifted me!**

### **PRAYER AFTER BAPTISMAL REMEMBRANCE**

*The Rev. Elsie Squires, President*

Let us pray . . .

**Gracious God,  
we thank you for the gift of water,  
for the promise of baptism,  
and for the renewing power of your Spirit.  
Strengthen us in our calling.  
Root us in your love.  
Send us out as people of courage and compassion.  
May our lives reflect the grace we have received,  
and may your church be a place  
where all are welcomed, cherished, and  
celebrated.  
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

## **Sending**

*Memorial United Church, Grand Falls-Windsor*

**HYMN:**

**“DRAW THE CIRCLE WIDE”**

**MORE VOICES #145**

**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. **R**

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

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**

## **BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH**

*The Rev. Kimberley Waite, Minister, Memorial United Church*

## **POSTLUDE**

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The shape and vision of this liturgy was shaped by the Rev. Oliver Dingwell, Chair of FDEE’s Liturgy Committee, and the Rev. James Ravenscroft, Chair of the FDEE Affirm Committee. Liturgical Materials crafted by the Rev. Oliver Dingwell, Chair, Liturgy Committee, First Dawn Eastern Edge. Call to Worship written by the Rev. James Ravenscroft. Inspiration for Renewal of Baptismal Faith based on the Apology to 2S and LGBTQIA+ Communities Service of the 45th General Council of The United Church of Canada which took place on August 8, 2025 at Knox United Church in Calgary, AB. Used with permission.

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