

Prayer Pilgrimage

A 40-day journey of prayer leading us to General Council 42



42nd General Council
August 8-15, 2015
Corner Brook, NL

The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

Welcome to the Pilgrimage of Prayer

A 40-day journey of prayer leading us to General Council 42

Friends,

For the past three years, the General Council 42 planning team has been preparing for this important gathering.

For the last two years, the Newfoundland and Labrador Conference local arrangements team has been arranging a warm welcome. Soon, we will be able to say "All is now ready!"

The scripture passage that has informed our preparations is Revelation 21:5, "Behold, I make all things new." The Moderator, The Very Rev. Dr. Gary Paterson, has been intentional to have it inform his leadership and reflection on the work of the General Council during this time. As the commissioners to GC42 prepare to make a physical pilgrimage to Corner Brook, Newfoundland, we invite the entire United Church of Canada into a prayer pilgrimage.

For the next 40 days we will pray together. The following prayers have been prayed, written, and shared with us as a daily prayer practice. As you pray each day, please hold in your heart our whole United Church. Think of the power of all of us praying together. So "May it be so." Amen.

With gratitude for the gifts and competency of the *Gathering* editorial team, and the wisdom and tenderness with which these prayers have been offered to the church, *let us pray.*

Rev. Maya Landell

Coordinator of Worship at GC42

We invite you to say the following prayer out loud each day in the 40 days of the Prayer Pilgrimage leading up to General Council 42, along with the specific prayer for the day. We also invite you to pray this prayer during each day of General Council.

Pilgrim Prayer

May I love this day and all that it brings
The dust, stones or mud beneath my feet
The air I breathe, food I eat, water I drink

May I open my heart to mysteries along the way
Greet fellow pilgrims with welcome and grace
Move lightly and simply through the day

May I give thanks for the Earth, our fragile home
For all my relations who have gone before me
And for all who will follow... I am not alone

May the spirit and blessing of the One who is love
- Holy One among us, all around us, and within us -
Be with me today, and surround me with love

Allison Rennie and Diane Ransom, Naramata, B.C.

Created in 2010 by Allison Rennie and Diane Ransom and said aloud each day while walking the Camino de Santiago

Week One



Prayer for Day 1 – Monday, June 29

God of all, we give you thanks and praise for this day.
Thank you that you are the God who creates, blesses, calls and redeems us.
In this time, remind us anew that it is
your breath that breathes us to new life,
your Word that shapes chaos into order in our lives and in the world.
Keep us attentive to your voice,
that by your grace we might live in the hope to which you've called us,
for the sake of this world that you so love.
Strengthen us to offer ourselves, hearts, souls, bodies, minds,
for the sake of your glory, in the freedom and joy which are ours in you.
With Christ, in Christ and through Christ, we pray. Amen.

Aaron Miller, Faith Centennial United Church, Selkirk, Ont.

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Prayer for Day 2 – Tuesday, June 30

Holy One, our voices rise together in thanksgiving for all the beauty that surrounds us.

For the beauty of space to pause in the summer, at work, at study or at play:
alone, with family, with friends, with creation, with pets, with community, with other pilgrims,
all time to proclaim the sacredness of the spiritual practice of prayer.

For the beauty of your creation:
the mountains, the prairies, the birds, the forests, the oceans, the tundra, the rivers, and the
animals, all proclaim the miracle of your handiwork around us.

For the beauty of your people throughout the world:
communities gathered in homes, in sanctuaries, in tents, in gymnasiums, in chapels, in cabins,
and in sacred spaces, all proclaiming the mystery of faith that draws us ever closer to you.

For the beauty of this United Church of Canada:
the struggling, the celebrating, the discerning, the laughing, the wondering, the crying, and the
praying, all yearning for the wisdom and integrity to be your hands and feet in our
communities, struggling for justice and peace.

And finally, for the beauty of the pilgrims preparing for the 42nd General Council 2015:
the youth, the volunteers, the children, the staff, the commissioners, the families, the
Moderator, all hoping for clarity, wisdom, patience, and faithfulness as a glimpse of your
called and gathered people in Corner Brook.

Help us, we pray on this journey together to be ever mindful of the abundance and the beauty in our lives, in our church, in our communities, and all around us.

We ask this in the name of the Christ who walks with us on every path as our companion and our guide. May it be so. Amen

Tracy Murton, St. Martin's United Church, Saskatoon, Sask.

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Prayer for Day 3 – Wednesday, July 1

"But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Matthew 6:33 (NRSV)

Holy God,
whose glory shines brighter than the morning sun,
whose grace is deeper than the oceans,
who is more powerful than raging storms,
who from the beginning of time has longed for humanity,
send your Holy Spirit upon us.
God of the ages,
You have shown compassion and mercy
in sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to live and die for us.
Help us to understand your call on our lives.
We answer your invitation with repentance,
we accept your grace and forgiveness.
Holy One,
be with us as we offer ourselves,
body, mind, and soul for your service.
We seek first your kingdom, trusting that all else will follow.
Grant us wisdom and strength, mercy and peace.
In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Heather Joy James, Cayuga United Church, Cayuga, Ont.



Prayer for Day 4 – Thursday, July 2

O Sacred One,
Let us blow off some steam.
Let us scream and rally
in the midst of the uncertainty in which you have called us.

We cry out in pain
because things are not all right
and we are tired of this fight.
We are tired of the disappointment with you and one another,
tired of the aching and the grieving,
tired of the struggle to keep our head above the water,
tired of the statistics, the red budget lines, and the dusty pews,
and tired of trying to be faithful in the midst of all this.

Let us blow off some steam.
Let us scream and rally in the midst of the uncertainty.

And, if this is the place where you are calling us,
then listen to our voices becoming hoarse
and feel our hearts ache with grief.
Let us be angry for a while
with you and with one another.
Let us scream and rally in the night and uncertainty.
And if this is where you call us,
then be Creator for us again.
Draw in our aching and our disappointments,

our brokenness and our failures;
draw in our longing and our faltering,
our tired-out and our dead places;
draw in the whole of our being,
and lift us with your clay-caked hands.

If this is where you call us,
then be Creator for us again.
Set your ancient, passionate lips upon ours
and breath your Spirit into us
to renew our lives and your church.
Let your breath ignite the flames in our hearts,
our passion and our creativity,
our sense of adventure and our daring,
our visioning and journeying,
our commitment to strive towards you
and to one another.

If this is where you call us,
then be Creator for us once again
lifting us, shaping us, renewing us, and sending us
and we will take this bold adventure with you
to be the church anew. Amen.

Micol Cottrell, Allenford-Park Head P.C., Allenford, Ont.

Photo: The United Church of Canada.



Prayer for Day 5 – Friday, July 3

Are we ready to say, "Yes" to this journey?

Yes

Yes to the journey

Yes to faith

Yes to Jesus as companion on the way

Yes to ministry

Yes to the people of God

Yes to travelling together

Yes to the changing church

Yes to its strengths

Yes to its weaknesses

Yes to the body of Christ in this place
as it is, as we are, good enough

Yes to travelling lightly

Yes to simplicity

Yes to a deeper awareness of all of creation

Yes to an open heart

Yes to gratitude

Yes to a softening of hard edges

Yes to putting one foot in front of the other

Yes to this day

Yes to God within, around, and between

Yes,

and again,

Yes

Each day, Yes

Yes

Sue Campbell, Caledon Village United Church, Caledon, Ont.

Photo: The United Church of Canada.



Prayer for Day 6 – Saturday, July 4

Divine Companion,
as I walk this day,
help me to be attentive
to you,
to this, your world,
and to others.

Deepen all these relationships
and strengthen your love within me
that I might be a presence
of your love in our world.

Amen.

Sue Campbell, Caledon Village United Church, Caledon, Ont.

Photo: The United Church of Canada.



Prayer for Day 7 – Sunday, July 5

Lover of all,
in the beginning
you brought forth life from chaos.
Dwellers of the land and sea,
creatures of the sky,
and humanity, in all our messiness,
were claimed and named as good.
Holy One,
you continue to create life out of chaos,
generosity where we see turmoil.
Be with us on this journey,
as we strive to live into
who you created us to be.
Encourage us to have difficult discussions,
strengthen us to make bold decisions.
Push us into the chaos,
so that with your love,
we may emerge into new life.
Transform us, we pray. Amen.

Jessica Cottrell, Harriston United Church, Harriston, Ont.

Photo: The United Church of Canada.

Week Two



Prayer for Day 8 – Monday, July 6

I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise. -Isaiah 43:15-21 (NRSV)

Behind me I leave a path of shadows.

I walk apart from it and into your magnificent light, towards the horizon, oh God.

I see your gracious arms leading me back from astray.

No longer shall I weep tears of yesterday but smile in joys of today.

I have journeyed from great tragedies and struggles, faced deceit and loss, anger and death. And in the quiet of my devastation I saw you, oh God.

I saw you in all beautiful things among this world and remained in awe at your wonder.

I shall not thirst, I shall not starve, I shall not doubt for my god is good.

And, as rivers are provided to the deer and food for the birds,
you will meet my needs all in good time.

So praise to you,

my setting sun and rising morn,

my quiet afternoons and content nights.

In peace shall your name be spoken. Amen.

Siobhan Browning, Trinity United, London, Ont.

Photo: Allie Caulfield, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)



Prayer for Day 9 – Tuesday, July 7

Do you see it...
when you wipe the morning sleep from your eyes
or rush down the stairs to pack the children's lunches?

Do you see it?
when you pour coffee in your mug
or laugh with the colleague recounting last night's adventure?

Do you see it?
when you enter the hospital room
or watch the slow, creeping tear on the face of uncertainty?

Do you see it?
when the meeting erupts in raucous laughter
or spins off to the sidelines of passionate debate?

Do you see it?
when the colours of setting sun paint the homeward sky
or when you slide into the arms of love as the screen door shuts?

Do you see it...
slipping between the sheets of every mundane moment
from morning's bed-rise until dusk's bed-fall?

It is there...
Spirit's breath.... Christ's touch...God's embrace
doing a new thing every day so you won't forget what **it's** all about!

Sue Browning, Grace United Church, Sarnia, Ont.

Photo: Ben Sutherland, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)



Prayer for Day 10 – Wednesday, July 8

This room is stuffy.
It's teeming with energy,
and hope,
and gratitude.
But it's stuffy.

The message is captivating.
It's tugging at our heart strings,
and calling us to find you, O God,
in this moment.

But still, we're tired after long journeys.
And it would be so easy to let our minds wander off
someplace else...

If it weren't for that butterfly.

From somewhere in the rafters behind me,
it sweeps down in the middle of the room.
I watch as its fluttering wings glide into the peripheral vision of others.
So seemingly out of nowhere that it scares them,
as they catch its movement heading in their direction.

But just as the butterfly wakes us from our tired slumbers –
jolts us to find ourselves here in this place –
its movements calm,
as it floats its way through our space.

And we realize it's just a butterfly,
as it flutters away.

Lauren Hodgson, St. Matthew's United Church, Toronto, Ont.

Photo: Kevin Cole, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)



Prayer for Day 11 – Thursday, July 9

We stumbled upon you.

In the middle of all my planning,
and organizing,
and listing where to be,
and when...
there you were.

Your presence: unassuming.
Your voice: captivating.
Your message: earth shattering.

From the first strum of your guitar,
and hauntingly beautiful note from your mouth,
I knew that *this* was it.

This was the moment that would define the experience.

So, I offer a prayer of deep gratitude.
For the reminder that you don't have to be a songwriter to write stuff down;
and that the world is never the same when a good poem is written;
for the fact that we can't do it from the confines of our own walls;
so we must feel the push to go places and feel things – places where stuff happens!
And not to worry about the stuff that doesn't make it,
because in the end "love wins big!"

I thank you for honesty.

And for the warning not to add to the noise.

Mostly, I thank you, God,
for the fearless souls who remind us what it means to be true,
to be brave,

to be inspired,
and inspiring.

And I thank you, God, for breaking open my hardened little heart.

May you continue to break us open,
through the songs of unassuming poets and prophets.

Their songs are your songs.

And so, we let ourselves.

We feel the pieces break away.

We listen.

And we wonder:

Are the risks greater than the beauty that could emerge?

Amen.

Lauren Hodgson, St. Matthew's United Church, Toronto, Ont.

Photo: moMents-fiXats, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)



Prayer for Day 12 – Friday, July 10

On being rooted in a spacious present

There's something about *space*, O God –
about being in a place where we have room,
to live, and to explore, and to feel your presence.

So, we take a moment to feel ourselves surrounded by your space.

We look around, and see expansiveness unfolding.
We close our eyes, and hear the echoes of our being.
We smell the goodness of rich, fertile soil,
seeds planted long ago, waiting for the right time of tending.
We feel our hearts open to those callings that linger in our bones –
the whispers that are so easy to ignore,
when they're cramped and weighed down, by
all
that
stuff.

But not now.
Not when we truly take time to be rooted in a spacious present.
Here, we give thanks for the gift of spaciousness,
as here you invite in a more wondrous present.

So, we take a deep breath, in and out,
connecting with you,

Our Source, Inspiring Spirit, wind of change,
and offer our deep gratitude for space.

And we ask you to make us brave,
and keep us tender.

Amen.

Sarah Chapman, Willowdale U.C., Willowdale, Ont.

Photo: Lisa Jacobs, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)



Prayer for Day 13 – Saturday, July 11

God who knows intimately the ache of feet that have walked far,
the pain of backs carrying a heavy load,
and the yearning of homesickness for people and places far away,
be with us in this time of journeying.

In Christ, you became a pilgrim like us –
a pilgrim who showed us how to wander and run and stumble after the Kingdom.
Though our journey now may not be as physically demanding,
still our hearts break when we feel our church cannot do enough
to counter the injustice in the world.

Our brains hurt with all there is to do,
and our souls feel separated from you, our Creator.

In your infinite love, help us to see how, just as Christ was present with his disciples,
you are present with us now in all those we are blessed to travel with,
to learn from, and to be challenged by.

Send your Holy Spirit to guide us, renew us, and heal us
as we continue on this pilgrimage together.

We pray in the name of the one who is calling us on a journey of resurrection, Amen.

Brenna Nickel, St. Paul's International United Church, Estevan, Sask.

Photo: Richard Weil, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)



Prayer for Day 14 – Sunday, July 12

I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior. I declared and saved and proclaimed when there was no strange god among you.... Isaiah 43:11-12 (NRSV)*

**in other translations “apart from me”*

Apart from you, there is no savior... O Redeemer God
Apart from you, there is no life... O Cosmic Creator
Apart from you, there is no hope... O Constant Companion
Apart from you, there is no wisdom... O Sophia, Wisdom of the Ages
Apart from you, there is no discernment... O Spirit of Change
Apart from you, there is no courage... O Steadfast Strength
Apart from you, there is no love... O Lover of my Soul
Apart from you, there is no purpose... O Cornerstone of the Church
Apart from you, we will bear no fruit... O True Vine
Apart from you...

we are lost and forsaken, wandering in a wilderness of our own making.

Turn our hearts and minds and spirits toward you...

...That what you are preparing to reveal, we will receive;

...That your offering of saving grace to the world will be our mission and ministry;

...That your proclaiming to your church will ring in our ears. ...

...That your revelation break through our delusions, plots and plans,

...That your saving Grace will still our fearful hearts,

...That your proclamations of deliverance will deliver us from the traps we design for ourselves.

O God, our Savior. O Christ, our Redeemer. O Spirit, our Living Breath.

Amen.

Lorna MacQueen, Hamilton Conference Staff, Hamilton, Ont.

Photo: Aramisse, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Week Three



Prayer for Day 15 – Monday, July 13

Donnez-moi

le goût de vivre

donnez-moi

le goût d'aimer

donnez-moi

envie de rire

et puis de chanter

Donnez-moi le goût de croire

que tout peut recommencer

donnez, donnez-moi l'espoir

qu'il me faut lutter

que tout ne se terminera pas

comme ça

Donnez-moi

le goût d'offrir

donnez-moi

le goût d'oser

donnez-moi

envie de séduire

et puis de rêver

Donnez-moi cette assurance
 que je peux en quelques mots
dire l'amour et la confiance
 en un monde tout nouveau
 en un monde
 nouveau

Dites-moi comment faire
 pour m'opposer aux malheurs
dites-moi où prolifèrent
 la haine et les peurs

Dites-moi comment m'approcher
 des autres humains en marche
dites-moi comment me laisser trouver
 par un Dieu qui me cherche

Dites-moi comment changer,
dites-moi comment... et laissez-moi vous dire.

David Fines, *Drummondville-Mauricie P.C., Batiscan, Que.*

Photo: The United Church of Canada.

Prayer for Day 16 – Tuesday, July 14



Running the race of faith can be fatiguing at times,
so we turn to you, Refresher of our souls, that we may sip of your goodness.
Replenish the parched places within
that we may be invigorated to carry on.
Encourage us to regularly breathe in your hope,
and breathe out negativity and fear.
Blow your cooling grace upon us when we get overheated in our discussions.
Strengthen our weary bodies and minds,
as we feed on the promise of what we are able to accomplish together.
Keep us listening to your Spirit, our delightful cheerleader, ever urging us onward.
May we hold to the course, and finish this race in love, and with great joy. Amen.

Karen MacLeod-Wilkie, South Shore P.C., Crapaud, P.E.I.

Photo: The United Church of Canada.

Prayer for Day 17 – Wednesday, July 15



I agreed to go.
On a whim, without much thought, without attention to the details.
I agreed to go.
Then I panicked:
it's too far away.
I have too much to leave behind.
I will be travelling alone.
I don't know the way.
What if I get lost?

I agreed to go.
Heart pounding, anxiety mounting, obsessed with the details.
I agreed to go.
Then I panicked:
You'll be fine, he said!
You'll have fun, she said!
It's the chance of a life time, they said!
Good-bye kisses were salty with tears.

I agreed to go.
Deep breaths, excitement mounting, path still unsure but calling me forward.
I agreed to go.
And panic was replaced with wonder:
Eyes wide as the sun rose over [my destination.]
Heart wide as thousands worshiped together.
Mind wide as the potential before us become clear.

I agreed to go,
On a whim, heart pounding, deep breaths,
I agreed to go.
Thank God!

Nora Vedress, Calvary United Church, Prince Albert, Sask.

Photo: The United Church of Canada.

Prayer for Day 18 – Thursday, July 16



I have heard it said that the miracle of the Red Sea
wasn't that Moses parted the waters
but that the person at the head of the line was brave enough to take the first step off the bank. With
water towering on either side,
with certain death behind them and an unknown future ahead,
how did they find the courage to start walking?
We pray this day for courage, God.
No need for grand gestures, or mind boggling signs,
all we ask for is courage.
Should you grant it,
it will be the miracle we need to take that first step towards our unknown future.
Hope mixed with grief;
anticipation mixed with apprehension;
certainty mixed with doubt—yes.
But woven into the journey will be your Spirit
and the promise that we need not be afraid.
Woven into the journey will be your Spirit
reflected in each face as we take these first steps together. Amen.

Nora Vedress, Calvary United Church, Prince Albert, Sask.

Photo: Jill Mitchell, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 19 – Friday, July 17



This Emmaus Road pilgrimage.....

I think of the two friends walking on the road.

They are sad.

They are defeated.

They go over the details of how death
so suddenly, so unexpectedly, touched their lives.

Even the glimmer of resurrection isn't enough to convince them.

Then, you are there walking with them,
talking them through their grief,

longing for them to see you, recognize the life in you.

Help us now, living Christ, help us as we walk this Emmaus Road.

May we give space to our grief, our doubt, our confusion
but let us not linger with these too long.

For you are here,

walking with us,

calling us to know your presence as we journey,

longing for us see your face in the new life being offered. Amen.

Nora Vedress, Calvary United Church, Prince Albert, Sask.

Photo: Just Jefa, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 20 – Saturday, July 18



May God bless our Pilgrimage.

Each step that has been taken so far stores the memories of a blessed and faithful people.
90 years of seeking justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly.
90 years of bravely facing challenge, ridicule, and defeat.
90 years of worshipping the Divine One, who calls us by name.
90 years of struggle to keep doors and hearts and minds open in the name of Christ's love.

May God bless our Pilgrimage.

Each step that is to come.
For our journey is not over,
the road ahead is simply unknown.
Yet hasn't always been?
For 90 years, haven't we had to trust that the ground before us was unfamiliar yet holy?
And so pray: "God bless our Pilgrimage"
as it was,
as it is,
as it will be.
Amen.

Nora Vedress, Calvary United Church, Prince Albert, Sask.

Photo: The United Church of Canada, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 21 – Sunday, July 19



We come to this place of gathering...
anticipating the joy of friends re-united and new friends to find.
We come...feeling the import of the discerning work we need to do.
We want to be open to Spirit in the midst of our church
as she is active in the world around us...stirring within each one.

Forgive us for the time not taken---in quiet preparation for this work;
in the nurturing of Spirit connection in our own lives, and in the lives of our congregations.

We are present now...wanting to see.
Like walking the beach after the storm...all appears new.
These rocks have been moved.
This small pool, home to so much life, is quite different now.
The birds are finding their nourishment in new places.
Yet all is teeming with life! We see it all around.

May we be as resilient as the ocean life.
May we see changing landscape as new opportunities.

Blow, stormy winds, blow.
We will look with hearts
to notice what newness you have brought at the end of our time together!

Pix Butt, York-Covehead Pastoral Charge, York, P.E.I.

Photo: Cléo Morgause, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Week Four



Prayer for Day 22 – Monday, July 20

based on Matthew 9:1-6

And so,
Jesus gathered the twelve together
and suddenly they had authority,
and Jesus said,
*Go. Proclaim the kingdom.
Take nothing –
no bag, nor bread,
nor money nor change of clothes.*
And so they set out,
with nothing other
than hearts
filled with good news,
and feet,
eager to carry it...

And so
may we who gather
be so emboldened.
May we gain such vision
from one another's presence
and from the Spirit
that we,

who may want to hold on to and carry so much,
set out
freely and eagerly together,
ready to leave all by the wayside,
except hearts
filled with good news,
and feet,
eager to carry it.
Amen.

Sheryl Spencer, Mount Forest Pastoral Charge, Mount Forest, Ont.

Art: Georges Rouault *Christ and the Apostles*. Photo: Ben Sutherland, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 23 – Tuesday, July 21



On the banks of the river
where angel feet have trod
and the saints danced,
soles pounding earth with holy fervor,
death denying grace poured out,
dripping with life freshly consecrated.

On the banks of the river,
there are things we can hide no longer.
Holy things. Terror-struck and awe-filled things.
Things we wish to keep and secure,
with fevered pitch and prayer firmly fastened.
we take what we long to keep but must let go.
On the banks of the river,
some things we can hide no longer:
our deepest love, our fragile hopes,
our naked fear of what might be...or not.

And yet, this is the place where angel feet have trod
and saints danced,
and the Word was drawn out of water long ago,
made flesh and lives among us still.

On the banks of the river – God draws faith out of us.
that we too might dance,

the soles of feet pounding earth,
to the rhythm that is running,
from fear to hope.

For God's sake,
let it run.

Matthew Fillier, Waverley Pastoral Charge, Fall River, N.S.

Photo: zhezhe2010, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 24 - Wednesday, July 22



Dieu qui marche toujours avec nous,
Dieu qui nous accompagne partout où nous allons,
Dieu qui nous attend et nous conduit sur tous les chemins qui nous prenons,
sur nos routes bien droites et dégagées
comme sur nos sentiers tortueux et ombragés,
sur celles où nous chantons au soleil de la vie
et sur ceux où nous luttons contre la pluie du doute,
dans nos courses d'un jour et dans nos longues marches,
dans nos voyages communs et nos randonnées solitaires,
que nos cœurs s'élèvent vers toi
pour te célébrer, pour te louer,
pour te manifester leur plus profonde reconnaissance.

Dieu qui marche toujours avec nous,
tu te tiens en arrière de nous
pour nous donner une petite poussée quand nous en avons besoin,
quand nous hésitons devant les obstacles,
tu marches à nos côtés,
pour nous soutenir quand nous trébuchons
et pour nous empêcher de trop dévier,
tu chemines au-devant de nous,
pour nous guider, pour nous montrer le chemin,
pour nous permettre d'aller toujours plus vers l'avant,
vers tous les passages parsemés d'amour, de foi et d'espérance,
qui mènent vers la plus belle des contrées
où déjà tu nous attends.

David Fines, *Drummondville-Mauricie Pastoral Charge, Batiscan, Que.*

Photo: Jasonb42882, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 25 – Thursday, July 23



*So God led the people by the roundabout way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea.
Exodus 13:18 (NRSV)*

God of Enduring Grace,
our pilgrim journey often takes us the roundabout way through desert wilderness.
Yet, we yearn for a direct route, an easy solution, a clear answer,
but the journey is often winding, wearying and worrying.
Guide us, we pray,
to keep our eyes on the prize,
knowing that your promise is coming,
perhaps not today, nor tomorrow,
but your kingdom is coming;
in us and through us.
May it be so. Amen.

Jeff Rock, Gaetz Memorial United Church, Red Deer, Alta.

Photo: GPS, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 26 – Friday, July 24



God,
you are deep play and deep justice.
We try to separate
but they are what you are
and what we are called to be.

We try to choose one or the other
but you choose them both.
They are lovers.
They are closer than thunder and lightning.
They are intertwined like gratitude and happiness.

They are what you are
and what we are called to be.

Help us
to move into the deep
of what you are
and what we are called to be.
Amen.

Sarah Chapman, Willowdale United Church, Willowdale, Ont.

Photo: Thinbofatter, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 27 – Saturday, July 25



God within,
As I step onto the unknown path,
may you guide my footsteps.
As I encounter the risen Christ in your people on this journey,
may you guide my listening and speaking.
As I bear witness to creations unfolding in front of me and disappearing behind me,
may you spark imagination and hope.
As I come to reconcile my own failings,
may you turn them into passion.
May the unknown path bring me closer to you, God,
who journeys with all pilgrim people.
Amen

Michael Shewburg, Islington United Church, Etobicoke, Ont.

Photo: Christian-Gutheir, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 28 – Sunday, July 26



Reflections at Café Mocha

A pigeon flies overhead,
trailing bits of straw and twigs
from an overstuffed beak.

But surely the nest
has been built already...
and so these new materials
must be for weaving
among its strands,
for renovation
for reinforcement,
enrichment,
some act of re-formation.

And it occurs to me
that so must we
fly home.
taking bits of experience,
strands of relationship,
scrapes of revelation,
patches of profound grace,
and prepare to
weave them into
what we already know,
piecing together
with patience,
with joy,
with daring,
what we call
the Kingdom of God.
our home.

Sheryl Spencer, Mount Forest Pastoral Charge, Mount Forest, Ont.

Photo: Sameer0406, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Week Five

Prayer for Day 29 – Monday, July 27

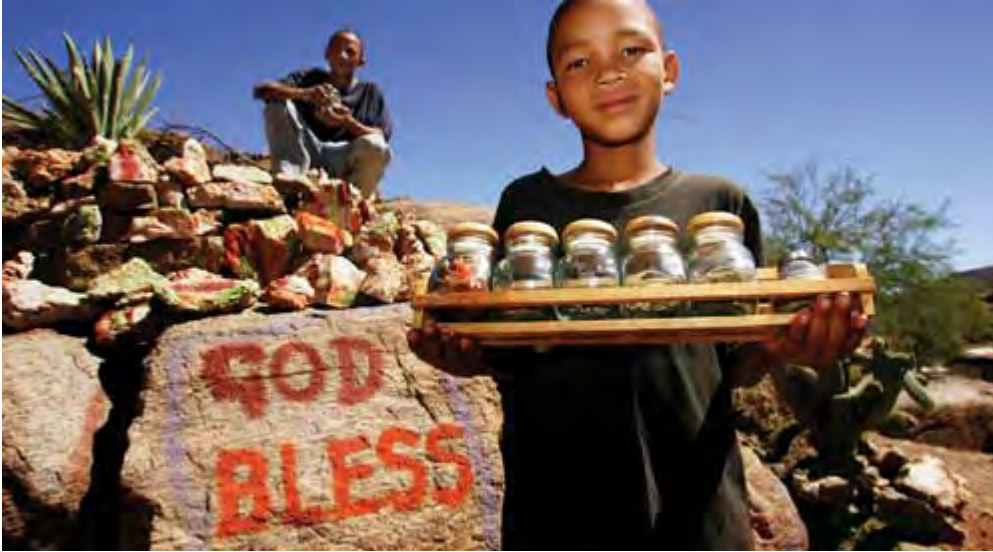


Creator, Spirit, Wellspring of Life –
when the path is hard, we lean on you.
When the path is lonely, we reach for you.
When the path is uncertain, we turn to you.
You ground our feet and cushion our heels.
You are the spring in each step.
You are the breeze that refreshes,
the darkness and dawn that form the day.
You are the life in all fullness,
only you have the perspective
to see the whole, big picture,
to know what is crucial,
to see through the distractions
and to lead us on our way home.
Grant us doubts, clearing space for surprise.
Grant us guideposts to turn us to question.
Bless us with companions in our seeking
and much grace,
as our grasp on life opens
and we are received.

Sheryl Johnson, Fairlawn Avenue United Church, Toronto, Ont.

Photo: Cowboy Dave, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 30 – Tuesday, July 28



God of the Journey,
you bless our steps—
as halting as they may be.
You bless our path—
as circuitous as it often becomes.
You bless our direction—
even as you realign it with your own.
You bless our pace—
knowing that our energy ebbs and flows.
You bless our ascent—
as life often seems a struggle.
You bless our descent—
and rejoice in times of ease.
You bless our focus—
when the way ahead is hidden.
You bless our delight—
when the vista takes our breath away.
You bless our companions—
those who offer an hand.
And you bless as we bless others—
those who walk with us each day.
Amen.

Michael Kooiman, Central, Weston Pastoral Charge, Weston, Ont.

Photo: The United Church of Canada, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 31 – Wednesday, July 29



“Before you speak to me about your religion, first show it to me in how you treat other people; before you tell me how much you love your God, show me in how much you love all of His children; before you preach to me of your passion for your faith, teach me about it through your compassion for your neighbors. In the end, I’m not as interested in what you have to tell or sell as in how you choose to live and give.” -Cory Booker, U.S. Senator, from his Facebook page

Loving and Faithful God,
May we hear these words from Cory Booker
and be reminded that our actions speak so much louder than our words.
May we live our faith out loud everyday
by how we interact with all our neighbours both near and far.
Let our faithful actions lead to faithful conversations
as we spread your love throughout this hurting world, one relationship at a time.
May we see the face of Christ in the people we meet,
and may the people we meet see the face of Christ in us. Amen

Betsy Exley, London Conference Staff, London, Ont.

Photo: Justice Beitzel, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 32 – Thursday, July 30



Loving God,
grant us wisdom to know when to listen and when to speak.
Grant us courage to know when to act and when to stand firm.
Grant us strength to know what needs to be held on to and what needs to be let go.
Grant us patience when we feel there isn't any left.
Grant us your vision for the world
so that we might be able to look beyond the surface of our own needs to the needs of others.
Grant us forgiveness when we fail to listen to your still small voice
and choose the easy way instead of the right way.
Open our eyes to see the connection we share to all creation
and instill within us a deeper sense of responsibility for it.
Your love and compassion for all holds us each day.
May we feel that embrace
and may it sustain us giving us the wisdom, courage, strength, patience and vision
to be Christ's hands and feet in this world.
Amen

Betsy Exley, *London Conference Staff, London, Ont.*

Photo: jennie-o, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 33 – Friday, July 31



God of Wonder and Change,
I give you thanks that you are with us and walk with us on our journey.
As we move through this time of change in our culture and in the church,
may I be open to your spirit moving through us.
O God, this is a challenging and exciting time.
May I draw on the strength and wisdom of your Spirit in community,
as we seek together ways of moving forward that will provide opportunities
for your church to continue in new and vibrant ways.
Grant all of us wisdom as we discern the future for this church of ours.
May we be able to let go of what we need to,
in order to embrace new ways of being church
for our time and for future generations.
I give thanks for what we have been, for what we are, and what we will be.
May we be able to provide the resources needed for this new era of our faith community.
May I be open to what you are calling me to do,
in order to be a part of this new thing you are doing in our midst.
Bless us all, as we do this your work and ministry in this place and time,
for now, and for generations to come.
In honour of the Christ, in and with us, I pray. Amen

Russell Mitchell-Walker, Eastside United Church, Regina, Sask.

Photo: Rose Braverman, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 34 – Saturday, August 1



Gracious and Holy Spirit,
as we walk toward our gathering in Newfoundland,
we ask that you draw our awareness of the steps we take.
With each step is trust.
We lean forward and for a brief moment we lose control.
Our weight shifts and we risk falling
but trust that our foot will land on solid ground,
ready to catch us in time to risk all over again.
As we look to General Council, we risk.
Will this be a successful step or will we fall on our faces?
Will we collectively swing our feet around to catch us as we lean forward?
Will there be solid ground to catch us?
Will there be solid ground
from which we may spring into the next moment of risk, our next surrender of control?

We walk with faith –
faith that as a church community, we are walking together.
We walk with all the saints of all times and places
who have seen your promise
and have taken that audacious step from what we know to what could be.
We walk with you, our God, our source, our way,
and know that, as the ground of our being, you are the ground onto which we step.
We know that this ground is always sure
but is also the base from which we once again lean forward,
balancing on the precipice of risk and faith.
We pray as your faithful people, Amen.

Jim Tenford, St. Andrew's United Church, Moose Jaw, Sask.

Prayer for Day 35 – Sunday, August 2



Oh God,

Help me hold the experiences of the journeys I have taken before in my life with gratitude. Let my awareness grow of how all of these past journeys, filled with both challenges and joys, have brought me to this moment. A different moment, a different journey, an invitation to pilgrimage with others.

As I take steps in this pilgrimage, help me be aware of any preplanned destinations I have created and help me notice the choices I make based on getting to these destinations. When obstacles come into my path, remind me that you are with me. Help me to see the choices I have – to either work through the obstacles before me or be open to a new path.

Let the fear of where my step will fall be held in suspension until the step is real. Be with me in my reflection on the steps I have taken. Help me examine my fear to see if it was real. If my fear was real, help me take a step in another direction. If my fear was false, help me let it go so that it is not part of the next step I take. Let me have compassion for fellow travelers who are busy choosing the direction of their steps.

Let every feeling of each moment, every sight, sound, taste and smell become part of this pilgrimage. As I step into each moment, I am thankful you are with me. Amen.

Brian Mitchell-Walker, Regina, Sask. Greenbelt Pilgrimage participant, EDGE Coach and Consultant

Photo: Alice Popkorn, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Week Six

Prayer for Day 36 – Monday, August 3



Holy One, Holy Three,
move in our hearts this day
with words that ease our fears.
Stir in us a yearning for adventure with you.
Move through our community this day
with actions that speak of love
and prayers that celebrate the world's diversity.
Be with us as we offer praise
and thanks to you this morning,
and then take us out into Your world
and shine your love through us.
Amen.

Alexa Gilmour, Windermere United Church, Toronto, Ont.

Photo: Duncan Harris, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 37 – Tuesday, August 4



inspiré du Psaume 23

Dieu, toi mon compagnon, ma compagne de route,
tu es mon guide, ma boussole, mon bâton de soutien.

Je marche.... et tu marches avec moi.

Tu traces la route, tu me conduis; tu connais bien le chemin.

Tu écarter de mon pied les pierres afin que je ne les heurte pas.

Tu sais toujours où me mener pour que je sois bien,
pour que je puisse refaire mes forces pour que je me ressource.

Tu me conduis vers les amitiés, dans le bon chemin.

Tu prends ma main et tu me sécurises, et je suis bien....

Je marche... et tu restes près de moi.

Dans les beaux jours et dans les temps d'orage, tu ne t'éloignes pas.

Je sens ton souffle tout près.

Dans mes grandes allégresses, tu chantes, tu fais la fête avec moi.

Tu es là dans mes solitudes, dans mes faiblesses, dans mes angoisses.

Tu me prends dans tes bras.

Tu me calmes; tu me consoles; tu me réchauffes.

Je peux toujours compter sur toi. Je n'ai pas peur. Je suis bien.

Et je continue à marcher.

Oui, tout au long de ma route, je suis assuré de ta présence.

Et je continuerai à marcher avec toi, Ô mon compagnon, Ô ma compagne,
Jusqu'au bout du chemin.

Amen

Nicole Beaudry, Bells Corners United Church, Ottawa, Ont.

Photo: TANAKA Juuyoh, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 38 – Wednesday, August 5



Journeying and Sojourning God,
as we prepare to travel to New-found-land,
may we travel to a new-found-faithfulness
as your people in this United Church.
On this journey,
teach us what we need to take
and what we need to leave behind.
Thank you, God,
we are not alone - you travel with us.
May we be attentive to your Holy Spirit
working in us
and in others.
We pray as disciples of Jesus, in Christ's way. Amen.

John Lawson, Three Willows United Church, Guelph, Ont.

Photo by IK T, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 39 – Thursday, August 6



Dieu,
Comment puis-je être porteur de transformation
 si je ne suis pas ouvert à être ébranlé dans mes propres profondeurs?
Comment puis-je être agent(e) de changement dans le monde
 si je reste indifférent quand tu m'appelles par mon nom?
Comment puis-je te suivre sans porter,
 comme Jésus, une croix lourde et pleine de sacrifices?
Comment puis-je avoir la saveur du sel et briller comme la lumière
 quand je marche dans la noirceur et ne résiste pas au mal?
Viens me donner le courage de rechercher la justice, de redécouvrir mon besoin de purification en
relation avec toi; accorde-moi aussi la disponibilité quotidienne de porter sur mes épaules mon
fardeau. Ainsi mon pèlerinage sera tout à la fois une intériorité et un éclatant témoignage pour un
monde renouvelé. Ce sera la grâce d'un pèlerinage communautaire. Amen et peut-être surtout:
alléluia, alléluia, alléluia!

David Lefneski, *Southwest United Church, Verdun, Que.*

Photo: Angela Marie Henriette, Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Prayer for Day 40 – Friday, August 7



Do we have a particular gift, Creator, amongst your creations?
Do we have a particular gift as church amongst the rest of your perfectly created people?
Are there riches in our Scripture, in our hymns,
 in our traditions, in our rituals, in our decision-making structure?
Do we have something to offer to the world?
Is there something in us with which you mean to bless the world?
If so, O Beautiful One, call it out in us and make us aware of it!

Kelly Colwell, Trinity-St. Paul's United Church in Toronto, Ontario

Photo by Alice Popkorn (CC BY 2.0).

A Prayer of Gratitude and Growth for the Way Home

Inspired by the prayers of "[Forest Church](#)," and in honour of Lammas/Loaf-mass, the Saxon harvest festival traditionally held on August 1 each year. For more information on the wheat harvest see "Lammas: Celebrating the Fruits of the First Harvest" by Anna Franklin and Paul Mason, (Llewellyn Publications, 2001).

Gratitude for the Harvest

The harvest reminds us of the many gifts we receive in life, for which we give thanks.

We Give Thanks for the Earth, Fire, Water and Wind

We stand firmly on the earth, the foundation of our lives.

We give thanks to the One who gives us life.

We kindle fire to bring us warmth and light.

We give thanks to the One who gives us life.

We receive the blessing of water which helps all things to grow.

We give thanks to the One who gives us life.

We call on the wind, the breath which animates all life.

We give thanks to the One who gives us life.

We gather around the circle in a spirit of love.

We give thanks to the One who gives us life.

For this prayer you are invited to gather three different coloured lengths of yarn, signifying harvest, growth and planting. These will be braided together towards the end of the prayer. For each reading and meditation, you are invited to hold one of the pieces of yarn.

Strand 1

Holding on to the "harvest" yarn, take time to ponder: For what are you grateful?

The Need to Grow

In order to have a harvest, the crops first grow. The same is true for each of us. We bear fruit in our lives because we are growing in a variety of ways.

Somewhere
a miracle occurs,
a seed is sown
in fertile ground,
germinates,
grows, ripens
and in due season
will be harvested.

Somewhere
a miracle occurs,
from the simplest
of ingredients,
flour and water,
salt and yeast,
kneaded and formed.
Daily bread.

Somewhere
a miracle occurs,
your word is sown
in fertile ground,
germinates,
grows, fruits
and in due season
will be harvested.

Somewhere
a miracle occurs,
as the purest
of ingredients,
love, hope
and joy make
broken lives whole.
Bread of Life.

God of miracle,
provider of
daily bread,
word of life
and love,
we offer you
our thanks.

John Birch, used with permission of Faithandworship.com.

Strand 2

Holding on to the “growing” yarn, take time to ponder: Where do you feel God is calling you to grow?

A Call to Plant

The process of growth and harvest begin with a seed being sown. In some ways, the seed gives up its life as a seed in order to become the seedling which in turn grows and produces grain.

A Reading from John 12:23-25 (NRSV):

Jesus answered them, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Strand 3

Holding on to the “planting” yarn, ponder: What needs to happen, what do I need to let go of, if the growth I wish is to come?

A Braiding Ritual

Holding all of these reflections in your heart, take time to braid the three yarn lengths together. Then ponder what the weaving together of these three means for you.

James Ravenscroft, St. Albert United Church, St. Albert, Alberta

Thank you!

Our thanks to all of those who offered their prayers for this pilgrimage. Many of those who contributed were participants in the Greenbelt Pilgrimage 2013, a group of 100 ministers and key leaders who journeyed to Cheltenham, England to participate in the yearly Greenbelt Worship Festival and to reflect together on what it means to be worshipping communities.

Thanks also to Allison Rennie for her special contributions to this Pilgrimage of Prayer.

Born in Vancouver, BC in 1961, Allison Rennie now lives in Naramata, BC. She is currently completing an MFA at the California Institute of Integral Studies. Find more about Allison's work on her website at www.allisonrennie.ca

Continue to pray during the days of General Council 42—we invite you to use the special prayer resource prepared by Gathering, the United Church's worship resource, featuring reflections written by former Moderators as well as other key leaders in the church.

One more reflection for the journey...

Camino de Santiago

Rain all day
the stony pathway drowned
our way squelches mud
streams through Gore-Tex
a last handful of almonds
fuels our slip up the mountain

Lone *casa*
red tile roof and caving mud brick walls
darker in the dim of afternoon as we draw closer

Hurry, Hurry
All pilgrims die on the way
Wild dogs and hunger

Beyond the shadow
of the open doorway
"Hola, Hola"
like the laughing poster of my Sunday School
Jesus
offers coffee, hot
and figs and dates and raisins and nuts and biscuits and toasts and juice
a clean broken couch and dry blankets
"Canada! Welcome!
This is your house."

Later still and damp
we step off the road
when the Shepherd comes,
with his 100 sheep and lambs, with the good dogs

But then who knows,
maybe there were only 99

Everything here is free

Allison Rennie, Naramata, B.C.