

## 55<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY SERVICE - UNITED CHURCH WOMEN

Written by: Inez Penny,

**CALL TO WORSHIP:** (unison) We come, as women of faith, to rekindle our lives with fruits of the Spirit, which will be given to us, through our loving, laughing, worshipping, playing and being, as one, with our God, across our great land, stretching from sea to sea.

**HYMN:** VU296 This Is God's Wondrous World

**CALL TO WORSHIP:**

**ONE:** We are in community with all God's children, across our country and our world.

**ALL:** We hold hands and hearts in our Communities of Faith, as we gather to be a "united" family.

**ONE:** Wherever we gather, let us open our hearts and minds.

**ALL:** As United Church Women, let us welcome the Spirit of our God.

**PRAYER:**

Our Loving Father, Mother, Caregiver and Hope for us all, "Whom have we on Earth beside Thee, Whom in Heaven, but Thee. We know that your love for us never ends and that when we come to you for guidance, wisdom and caring arms to enfold us, You will share that love and grace to help us through our good and bad times. We remember, with love and gratitude the grandmothers, mothers, aunts and caring women who began a Community of Faith for us across Canada. It is through their teachings and guidance, we can still come together as United Church Women, in a bond of love that stretches from Coast to Coast. It is with grateful hearts, we remember our mentors of the past - we will never forget them - may they Rest in Peace. Be with those of us who carry on their legacy - working in churches, kitchens, hospital rooms, seniors' residences and wherever You need us, God to be a helping presence. May we strive, in the future, to answer the Call to serve You, wherever and for whatever reason we are called. Here, too, we remember, with love, our women and their families across the world, who go through hardships to "keep the Faith." Help us to keep helping our friends in other lands through our M&S giving's and to pray daily for their safety and peace.

And, so, Dear God, we ask your blessing on us all, as we gather, across our land, to play, share community and worship together and be "One in the Bond of Love. Amen

**LORD'S PRAYER**

**HYMN:** VU381 Spirit Of Life

**MEDITATION** - see attached

**HYMN:** VU227 For the Fruit of All Creation

**BENEDICTION:**

And now, Dear God, let us go into your world, to love and serve Thee and may the blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be with us all and all Thy children around the world. Amen

A note from Inez Penny

“I wanted to get across how proud I am to be UCW – to encourage others “to go forward in faith” because of our wonderful women of the past”

## MEDITATION 55<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY SERVICE UNITED CHURCH WOMEN

To join women of the congregation for the total mission of 'the Church - what a mission that began with our women of faith - grandmothers, mothers, aunts, sisters - 55 years ago – our journey through the decades began with a Mission of Faith and we journey on, today, with that same faith and love.

Celebrating Spirit - we gather in meeting rooms, church pews, church camps, kitchens, senior's residences - anywhere and everywhere the Spirit is there and the celebration begins.

I remember my mom and her friends, cooking pots of food and carrying them to the church hall for a celebration or fundraiser - no vehicles present - a walk for Christ's work - a labour of love. This group of women was known as WA -Women's Association. Today, yes, technology has helped the manual labour, but the same needs, still in our churches, communities and world are being met by our faithful UCW's - still labours of love. The other component of our women's work was WMS (Women's Missionary Society) – there too, I would sometimes be present, as a child, as the women packed parcels of clothing, bedding, etc. to send to our friends in other countries. This work of love still is carried on, maybe, not quite in the same way, especially in communities where churches are closing, but our women are still meeting "everyday needs" - are still about God's work - and can still meet for support, for a song and a prayer. A UCW of three women, in outport Newfoundland/Labrador supports well our motto, our work, our gatherings and we still carry on, in some places, with such few, but faithful members. In Labrador, their members travel by boat for an annual gathering of food, fun and fellowship. From sea to sea, East to West, North to South, across our amazing country, our women are "answering the call "

In the early 2000's God spoke to the hearts of United Church Women and a UCW member from each province, with president and some staff members travelled to Zambia to learn about the disease AIDS and come back to give numerous presentations across Canada to encourage more giving to M&S, with the hope to help the people there. We did our mission on return - but our blessing was in witnessing. “Celebrating Spirit” by the African people, who taught us so much about love, sharing, caring and being thankful. We were shown

God's love in so many ways in that caring for us and each other and their faith in God gave us renewed hope to carry on our lives. A true lesson for us today, is that we carry on, with fewer people, fewer resources, but with our same faith.

These words of assurance come to mind:

As UCW continues to support M&S in a generous and caring way - we are carrying out God's Assurance – "It is more blessed to give than to receive" - Matthew 7 -12. We are made whole by the Christ who heals us.

We are all God's children and given, at birth, a special place in the Kingdom. We are created equal - many think they are not as capable as others to hold offices, to do certain work. God has a place for all in this life. I like to tell the story of the very bent tree in my garden. Visitors to my place, look at this tree and say, "why don't you cut it down". I reply, "because it has a purpose. It does a great job of holding the other end of my clothesline" - and that is so! We all have a reason for being and it is great, it is not all the same purpose - who would do the other necessary things.

In closing, I reflect on my first real experience of sharing deeply in "Spirituality". Many years ago, the Rt. Rev. Stan McKay, a past Moderator, came to Newfoundland/Labrador to share "Spiritual Retreats" with us. I was happy to attend many sessions by the lakeshore in the early morning, watching the sun rise, hearing the birds singing, as we sang, loved and prayed together, I felt the spirit of the native "Beothuks Peoples" around me, as I sat by the waters of the lake. I have, also, been given the gift of spirituality by our native women who have been present at our UCW gatherings and in other venues. Our native peoples have opened up my "spirit" to recognizing this blessing in other times and places.

So may the spirit in me, greet the spirit in all of you, my UCW friends, across Canada - and may we keep "Celebrating Spirit" with everyone we meet.

A chorus we sing at our meetings is:

"We are One in the Bond of Love,  
We are One in the Bond of Love.  
We have joined our spirits to the Spirit of God,  
We are One in the Bond of Love."

In Christian Love,  
Inez Penney,  
Newfoundland & Labrador District.