

**Summerland United Church**  
**October 13 2024**  
**Theme: The United Church Call and Vision: Bold Discipleship**

**Threshold** Today is our third week and final week considering the United Church Call and Vision Statement. Last week we pondered what Deep Spirituality meant for us and the week previous was Daring Justice. Today, we turn our attention to Bold Discipleship, with the invitation to consider just what being bold means. For many the notion of being bold, calls to mind the idea of being aggressive, confronting and audacious. However, as we will hear in our scriptures from both the Hebrew texts and the Christian ones, perhaps being bold really means practicing humility, compassion and being gentle with one another. Perhaps Bold Discipleship looks different from what we might expect.

**Scripture:** Micah 6:8 and Matthew 5:1- 10

Reader: May God bless our understanding of these sacred words.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

**Reflection**

When I first applied for the job here, I read over the Summerland Church profile – to see what I would be getting myself into – and one line stuck out to me – *we meet people where they are on their spiritual and life journey*. And I've been thinking about this line a lot this week as I consider what the notion of Bold Discipleship means to me. A year and a half ago when we looked at these same words – Bold Discipleship – and I asked the question – what does Bold Discipleship look like here at Summerland UC – the responses were things like: welcoming all, the food bank, care home visits, reconciliation, Sunday worship, neighbourlink, community meals, pastoral care, being a safe harbour.

In the last weeks I've had conversations with 3 or more people who commented that what this community does really well is provide hospitality. People feel welcome and comfortable right away when they come here for Sunday worship and other events. For one, the welcome she received when she came here is what brought her back to church after many years absence. She felt the presence of God here and present in the people she met.

When I started working here, almost 2 years ago exactly, I felt the same. I carried the Sunday morning welcome, from my previous church, in my pocket, waiting to see if it would be authentic here in this community as well – and yup it is!

At first glance I imagine we hear the words – Bold Discipleship – we think of bold as being synonymous with Loud, Brash, Forward. In fact my thesaurus also included words like – nervy, cheeky and impudent.

And while I'm happy to think of Bold in terms of Confident, Brave and Courageous, and I can lean towards cheeky at times. I don't think any of us have any interest in being bold disciples who are loud or brash or aggressive.

And if we look to scripture what we are called to be as children of God are none of those things. In fact, we called to the exact opposite – Micah says – to seek justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God. The Beatitudes give blessings to the poor, those who mourn, the meek, those who are hungry, the peacemakers, the merciful, the pure of heart. When you think about it – the people who

care about others, who choose community rather than individualism, those with empathy for humanity and want to bring goodness, equality and comfort to all.

Which is really handy, because those are the ideals that drive this community. The belief in these ideals has given this community the fortitude, the perseverance, and honestly the utter grit needed to bring positive change to the community of Summerland. So, if this, if this, is what Bold Discipleship means – we're doing it.

These are the ideals that will give us a firm foundation as we move into our shared space in a couple of weeks. Remembering the words of Micah, to seek justice, love kindness and walk humbly will necessary if and when we bump up against differences between our two communities.

So here's some honest talk about the differences between our two communities. They are quite a bit smaller than ours. They haven't had a priest for a number of years. They survived Covid, as we did, but continue to struggle with all the issues facing churches today – declining numbers, aging, financial concerns. By us moving in it will alleviate some financial worries, it will bring some energy and vitality to the building.

Our community is thriving, we've welcomed new members, we have more to welcome yet. We've revitalized programs that didn't run during covid and there drive and vision for expanding ministries in the future.

So, for a moment, lets put ourselves in their shoes. In a recent conversation with our soon to be Anglican roommates they mentioned they average about 15 – 20 people in attendance on a Sunday. We average about 40 – 50. To them, we must seem like a huge entity swooping in and possibly just taking over everywhere. They're moving furniture around, rearranging rooms, cleaning out storage to make space for us. Which they are happy and excited to be doing, there's no doubts there. But once we arrive, we're going to fill up all those spaces very quickly. I imagine in might feel like knowing your college dorm roommate is a prizewinning sumo wrestler or extremely large bear.

So, I encourage us to remember the words of Micah – seek justice, love kindness, walk humbly. We will need to be patient, respectful, and considerate – which I know seems like a no brainer. But it's worth keeping in the forefront of our minds, especially during the time of transition as we get used to each other.

I go back to the line from the Summerland UC church profile – *we meet people wherever they are on their spiritual and life journey* – I expect we'll find that our new roommates, for lack of a better term, are at different places in their spiritual and life journey's and so it will be especially important to remember that what Bold Discipleship means to us is – that's ok. We can meet them wherever they are with respect and consideration, while at the same time remaining authentic to where we are.

The Call and Vision of the United Church of Canada is:

*Deep Spirituality. Bold Discipleship. Daring Justice.*

*These six words are our call as a United Church. And they go with a vision:*

*Called by God, as disciples of Jesus, The United Church of Canada seeks to be a bold, connected, evolving church of diverse, courageous, hope-filled communities united in deep spirituality, inspiring worship, and daring justice.*

As we prepare for this time of transition and new life, may we hold these words in our hearts, our minds, our spirits and live into them with the fullness of who we are.

## **The New Creed**

We are not alone,  
we live in God's world.

We believe in God:  
who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus,  
the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others  
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.  
We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.  
In life, in death, in life beyond death,  
God is with us.  
We are not alone.  
Thanks be to God.