

Oct 20th Final Service on Henry Ave

Declaration of Purpose: The time has come for this congregation of Christ's holy Church under God's leadership, to take leave of this building. It has been dedicated for the ministry of God's Word and Sacraments. It has provided refuge and comfort for God's people. It has served this household of faith. It is fitting, therefore, that as we take our leave of this house, we lift up our hearts in thanksgiving.

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:

a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,

a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before; and God will call the past to account.

Reflections:

Covering more than 100 years of Church life would take us hours to do it justice and I promise you we are not going to do that. Instead, we will take some time to reflect on a few aspects of church life, knowing it is not a complete picture of the rich and abundant life this church has had.

To being I invite Sharon O'S to come forward to share with us the rich history of Outreach and Service this Church has provided to our community of Summerland, the Okanagan Valley and the whole world.

Sharon O'S: Mission and Outreach History

Kathleen Estabrooks as been a member of this church since she was a child. This place has been like a second home to her. Now she masterfully oversees our music ministry

and today she shares with us her reflections on Sunday School here at SUC and the production of Jesus Christ Superstar – performed in 19

Kathleen Estabrooks: Sunday School and Jesus Christ Superstar

John Bubb is a member of our church and the treasurer for the food bank and resource centre. He also is our A/V tech Guru, for which we are so grateful, but rather than give us a history of the evolution of church technology, he will share with us how the Food Bank and Resource Centre are intricately woven into the fabric of this church's life.

John bubb, food bank and resource centre

Rev. Armand Houle was minister here from 2013 – 2020. It was during his tenure here that the current mission statement of our church was visioned and formed, as well as a strategic plan formulated. It is from these two visions that the notion of re-development of the property and the desire to bring low income housing to Summerland came.

Armand Houle, minister from 2013 – 2020

David Jonsson is the chair of our church council and also a member of the redevelopment committee (along with Paul Barber, Charlotte Burley and Dixie Rosher). He has faithfully guided this community through Covid and these last couple years of re-development and change.

David Jonsson Council Chair

Thank you for sharing your reflections on this communities journey. We know there are many more reflections we could have shared. If these have stirred up memories and reflections of your own, you'll find papers at the back of the sanctuary where you can record your own memories for inclusion in our memory book.

Gathering together: The Story of Ruth

Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay.
Your people will be my people and your God my God.

Reflection: Anne

In the spring I brought in sunflower seeds that I saved from my garden. I used them as an illustration of our Easter story: how new life comes from death. We looked at the strange, mysterious and miraculous way huge flowers can grow from tiny seeds. We even noted that in a way, a sunflower seed is like a tomb, holding all the potential of new life within. I had an abundance of seeds so everyone was invited to take seeds and grow their own sunflowers. So over the season 1 flower gave life to many many more flowers – pictured here. Now, these flowers will die, and perhaps some of us will save seeds for next year. We've already heard scripture about a time for every season, and the soothing words about the cycles of seasons and life. No matter how hard we try, no

matter how much we want things to stay the same, They don't and they can't. Seasons change, sunflowers die and the life span of buildings end. But the promise of our stories are true – out of these changes and out of what seems like death – new life beckons.

In the story of Ruth there is a famine, and the people move from one place to another seeking a home. Ruth, a Moabite, is a stranger to Naomi, with little in common, other than a desire for a peaceful life. Ruth is willing to put aside any fears she might have about moving to a different and strange place – trusting that both God and her dear friend will guide her safely. In Ruth's words

Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay.

Your people will be my people and your God my God.

We hear the promise of God to be with us always. Wherever we go, so does God. Where we stay, God stays. We are a community of people together with each other and God always. In the story of Ruth there is hardship, and strife, along with joy. As it is with our lives too and so again we hear the good news– new life beckons.

Shortly we will hear a passage from Luke, about a friend in need of nourishment for others. His neighbour, tucked into bed for the night and comfortable doesn't want to get up do anything about it. But then he changes his mind and provides bread to his neighbour. The person who has bread is comfortable, warm and content, they're not interested in discomforting themselves for the benefit of others – they're not interested in changing any of their habits. At first.

This is the key point of the message. We all like our comforts and routines, and if we don't have to change, many of us choose not to.

But then, life happens. We are a community of people and as good members of community when we see our neighbours in need – when they ask, when they seek, when they knock – we give, we find for them, and we invite them in. In turn when we are in need – when we ask, when we seek, when we knock – we receive, we find, and the door is opened to us.

This is what the neighbour does. He changes his routine to support his friend, who in turn is supporting others.

Opening the door, welcoming the neighbour or the stranger, brings change. Changes to habit and routine. For over 100 years this church has been a place where any who knock find a welcome. We have been the neighbour opening the door in the night, providing nourishment, which we will continue to do.

Yet, now we are also the friend asking, seeking and knocking. St. Stephen Church, with faith and friendship, will welcome us in when we knock – quite literally, later this morning.

Together we will live as neighbours and friends, continuing our journeys of faith in a shared space. And somehow as community together we will incorporate all the characters of this story – the guests seeking nourishment, the neighbour opening the door, and the friend bringing comfort to all. They are the embodiment of God in the world. Just as we will be.

It's no wonder this story comes directly after Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray. For this story is an illustration of his prayer – the friend asks for bread for his guests. The neighbour, who has more than enough, shares his daily bread. Nor does he remain annoyed at his friend for waking him in the night – he forgives. In doing these things he, his friend, and the guests show us how to be God's Kingdom on earth.

May we live into this example, with faith, with trust and with hope – knowing that new life beckons.

Scripture: Luke 11:1-10

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, "Jesus, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." ² And he said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation."

Jesus said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, a neighbour and you go to your neighbour at midnight and say, 'lend me three loaves of bread, because friends of my mine on a journey have arrived and I have nothing to set before them.'

Then the neighbour says, 'leave me alone. The door is locked and the children and I are already in bed. I can't get up to look after your needs.' I tell you, though your neighbour will not get up and give you the bread out of friendship, your persistence will make your neighbour get up and give you what you need.

That's why I tell you, keep asking and you'll receive; keep looking and the door will open; keep knocking and the door will open. For whoever asks, receives, whoever seeks, finds; whoever knocks is admitted.

We have asked, we have looked and we have knocked at the door of our faith, seeking a new way forward, to make room for those who need it most here on this property. And so with trust, sadness and hope we call upon the church trustees who have tended to this property to decommission it.

Trustees Decommissioning: This building was dedicated and named Summerland United Church in 1984. Before that, other buildings also known as Summerland United Church and St. Andrew's United Church, were on this property. Now, we close this building, as the ones before it were.

As a Community of faith we commend the land on which it stands to another purpose. We declare that it is no longer the place of meeting for a congregation of The United Church of Canada.

Prayer: O God, in your great goodness, you have blessed the many ministries carried on by this congregation in this building.

We pray that, now and in the days and years to come, you may greatly bless the many ministries we carry with us into the future.

Bless all those who have worshipped in this building for so long and bless us as we move to another church building and worship you there.

As disciples of the risen Christ, may we be channels at all times of your steadfast love; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.