

Sunday, October 23, 2022 Pentecost 20 *“Time, Talent Treasures”*

Romans 8:28-39 Hebrews 6:10-19 Luke 18:9-14

What is hope? We know that it is one of the gifts God gives us through the birth of Jesus for we reflect on hope as we begin the advent season. Hope is something we have, we need and give to others as they face situations which sometimes seems lost. Just what gives us hope in our world today? What do we really hope for? Why? In reflecting on Hebrews 6:19 “This hope as anchor for the soul..is firm and secure.” God is in control of the hope we hold but how relevant is this to the world of today.

Just think about what is happening in this moment around the world—war in Ukraine continues, droughts, floods, famine, weather shifts, economic unrest, leadership challenges in different countries, inflation and the cost of living continuing to rise. Where is our hope as we face all these things and more?

Often when we think of the news of the day we look to the news teams which broadcast daily the stories that matter to Canadians. The person sitting at the desk staring into the camera is known as the news anchor. The one individual who reads the news or turns to reporters wherever the story is taking place to enable them to tell the details. This person at the desk is usually experienced and knowledgeable enough to ask relevant and pertinent questions of the reporter in order that the listener understands what is occurring. The news anchor then usually summarizes the events and moves on to another story.

How many times did you turn to the news—whatever broadcasting station you watch regularly to see the familiar faces telling you what is happening as the outbreaks, lockdowns and challenges were faced by people around the world. As people we watched and had hope that the storytellers- the news anchor included- were keeping us informed enough to know and learn as they were learning.

Psalms 46: 1-2 states “God is our refuge and strength an ever present help in times of trouble; therefore we will not fear.” These past couple of years have seen everyone question everything what has occurred and now analysis and understanding of what happened is taken

seriously so as to not repeat mistakes if such an event were to occur. As the world emerges from the pandemic the concerns has also lead us to sort out priorities. This includes the church and particularly the UCC. As we recognize the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the one of the active groups within the UCC, the UCW, we need to look at who we are and where our priorities lie.

When the UCW was formed in 1962 the role women played in the church was active as the church was a meeting place for women who primarily worked at home. UCW gatherings enabled the women to socialize, learn, share common problems and to actively take leadership in the church. Sixty years later, we need to look at the UCW today—some of the women in our local group have been members for years; some are getting involved because of the need for social interaction and some are new to the purpose of this group. But all have one goal and that is to be united in mission, study, fellowship and service. This may be the written purpose, but this is not the key reason to gather—it is to share and laugh, to learn and enjoy treats and to hear about what is happening and not happening in the Church or community and mostly to build friendships knowing that we all connect to the Anchor of Jesus Christ.

The hope for the UCW is similar to the hope for the UCC and other churches in this post pandemic time.== new members who are willing to serve, commit themselves to Christ Jesus and to learn more about what it means to follow Jesus our anchor. The purpose of an anchor which is a heavy object attached to a rope or chain, is to moor a vessel to the sea bottom. Typically it has a metal shank with a ring at one end for the rope and a pair of curved and/or barbed flukes at the other. In heavy winds the boat drops its anchor in order to upright. But if the boat is not held fast by its anchor, it will weave back and forth, causing anyone on board to be sick or even potentially the loss of cargo. The anchor dropped through the water to the bottom brings safety and knowing that it will remain afloat. But what about your faith? Where is your hope?

In these weeks between Thanksgiving and the start of Advent we are focusing on our stewardship as faithful followers of Christ and how we serve our church. We have heard about the UN World Food Day and next week we will hear locally from the Windsor Essex County Health Unit about opioid overdoses. In the weeks to come we will “Remember them” - those

who served in the Canadian Forces for our freedom and we will look to the future with the vision of the United Church being a focal point. But in all of these times of worship, we need to be ground firm and deep in Christ's love. For when we think of Jesus' love for us we reflect on what it is he called us to do. We are called according to God's purpose. We are called, justified and glorified because we love God. And to love God means to be humble.

Jesus taught us this through the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector who went into the temple to pray. The Pharisee talking loudly to God states, "God I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues adulterers or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give a tenth of all my income."

But the tax collector not even looking up beat his breast and said, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" He humbled himself before God and was justified. Do we do the same?

Through the years the UCW had had and do have many dedicated talented and determined women serve the UCC. None more important are those than who we have today—for each person plays a role in continuing the UCW group. Not all UCW members are interested in rallies and celebrations—there is limited numbers for this in Antler River Watershed RC. But as an organized group within the church the UCW continues to support the church's mission both locally and internationally and we do so enjoying each other's company, laughing and learning as we seek to grow in faith together.

It is the UCW in this church that sponsored the photography evening with Mike Evans by supplying refreshments. They are the one's hosting the bus trip to London and go Van Gogh and in February they will be the ones sponsoring a concert featuring Elvis Presley! Any money raised is shared with others whether through special missions of the UCW, locally or given to the general fund of the church; Glenwood UCW is alive and well.

SO today we give thanks for the UCW here and in the UCC. Let us all look to the future with a widening sense of hope where we draw strength from God's word and offer to God our time, our talent and the treasures we receive. Let us continue in hope. Let us pray.

PRAYER Holy God of grace and love. We ask your blessing upon those who serve diligently in this church and lift up to you in celebrating the lives of the UCW members who are resting with you. We give thanks for their commitment to serve just as we honour and celebrate the UCW which continues to have hope and faith in you.

Bless us all O God for we know that our anchor is Christ Jesus and whether the winds are calm or blowing fiercely in this world we can count on his strength and guidance. Bless us we pray as we put our lives into your hands. Call all of us O God to have hope in you as we continue to worship you in praise and thanksgiving. Hear our prayers we offer in this time of silence.

AMEN>