

Watch this week's service on YouTube by clicking: [June 28 Worship Service Video](#)

An audio file of this week's reflection is on the church website: <https://charleswoodunited.org/media/sermons/>

Prelude

Carla and Brendan share a favorite of theirs and ours: [Come Into His Presence](#)

Dear Friends

One of our traditions at Charleswood in summer worship is called My Favorite Hymn. It is an opportunity for someone at worship to request a hymn that we then all join in singing. A few weeks ago I invited you to send in your favorite hymns requests by email and we have been sharing them in the weeks since. One surprising request came from someone who watches our service but doesn't attend Charleswood. In fact, she doesn't even live in Winnipeg. Anna Stewart from Roblin MB is someone I have known for nearly thirty years through our work together in the wider church. But Anna wasn't simply tuning into our services for curiosity sake. Anna has a friend in our congregation and that friend wanted to share what we are doing in this time of worship suspension.

As we approach Canada Day this year it seems to me that this is what Canada is, a community of neighbours. Being a good neighbor doesn't necessarily mean living next door to one another. Nor does it mean going to the same church. Being a good neighbor means a willingness to share that which we value, that which we respect, what which we love.

So it is with great delight that I am honoring Anna's request and thus our first hymn today is "Draw the Circle Wide". It is a hymn that reminds us we can always be looking to expand our horizons and include those who have previously been left out.

Opening Hymn

Join the opening hymn by clicking here: [Draw the Circle Wide](#)

Bible Reading

The Scripture Lesson for June 28 can be read it by clicking here: [Matthew 9:9-17](#)

Solo

A favorite traditional hymn sung by Richard Ball: [In The Garden](#)

Reflection

Recently I was speaking with our intrepid cameraman Benjamin and he asked me if I had ever heard of *the God angle*. I thought perhaps that it was a trick question. Either that or a theological one as Benjamin is astute enough to pose one of those. But it was neither. *The God angle* is a phrase that he learned during his studies in journalism. His professor used it to describe a particular camera shot that accomplishes two things simultaneously. It is shot from slightly above, getting its name from the idea that God looks down on us from heaven. But in addition to being raised, *the God angle* also broadens the shot and brings more people into the picture.

This is the last Sunday in June and therefore the Sunday before Canada Day. Like so many other things our Canada Day celebrations are going to be severely altered by the times in which we are living. We won't be going to street festivals and eating all that wonderful street food. We won't be gathering by the thousands in Assiniboine Park to listen to a concert. If there are fireworks they won't be viewed down at The Forks surrounded by a great throng of people. No, this year Canada Day is going to be a lot quieter and necessarily so.

But perhaps that presents an opportunity. In a Canada Day that is going to be somewhat still, we can use the space to reflect upon where we are as a country and what work we need yet to do. This June has brought to our conscious thoughts many things about the Canada that we love that reminds us it is not yet what we wish it would be. Last Sunday was Indigenous People's Day and those festivities also had to be softened and become less than they have been in the past. But nonetheless we need to remember that while we are working towards reconciliation we have a long ways yet to go. Indeed, we are learning that the path of reconciliation leads us to many other social issues, that many things are connected. It is Pride Month and the annual Pride Parade had to be cancelled this year for understandable reasons. But that decision took away an opportunity to have our collective consciousness raised about the ways LGBTQ folk still need to be fully integrated, fully included in all aspects of our life together. Most especially, this June we have been made more aware that Black Lives Matter is a concern that extends to those of us living in Canada and that much work needs to be done to create the anti-racist society that we desire to live in.

There are many things to think about as Canada Day approaches and I wonder just how much we would benefit from *a God angle*. A God angle would mean a chance to view our Canada from above, with the values of heaven in mind. And a chance to broaden our view and see who yet needs to be included.

In the lesson we have shared today from Matthew 9, Jesus comes upon a tax collector named Matthew. As a Jewish person working for the Roman officials, tax collectors were not especially well liked. In fact, they were thought of as something of a traitor. But Jesus invites Matthew to follow and Matthew takes him up on the offer. Immediately after there is hospitality offered and they are dining at the table in the house of Jesus. His disciples are there as are some of the religious authorities. The religious authorities ask the disciples why it is that Jesus welcomes tax collectors and sinners and eats with them.

It is a common theme in theme in the gospels that Jesus and the religious authorities disagree strongly on who should be welcome in faithful company. The authorities wanted Jesus to follow their rules, to see things from their angle. Jesus wanted to follow God's rules, to see things from *a God angle*. For Jesus there was no such thing as the clean and the unclean, the righteous and the unrighteous, the saved and the unsaved. There was no such thing for him as the loved and the not loved, the accepted and the unaccepted, the included and the excluded. The *God angle* from which Jesus saw our communities was one that was broad and ever-broadening, ever adding those who were left out, ever including those no one else wanted. Jesus invited others who thought they had seen it all to see life together from *the God angle*.

This Canada Day why don't we take *the God angle*? Thankful for everything that we have for this is a remarkable land. But aspiring to be even more.

Hymn

View and enjoy the Voices United hymn by clicking here: [God Is Here](#)

Prayers

How shall we respond to the grace that has been given to us in this Canada of ours? With hearts uplifted, with voices full of praise, with humble recognition that what we have is neither to be taken for granted nor considered lightly. Let us then express our gratitude for that which has been given and that which has been created.

We praise you God of all Creation, for the beauty of this land which is unsurpassed when considered as whole. For the waters of three oceans, for the majesty of mountains, for the vast expanse of prairie that we call home, for the forests that renew the air, for rivers and lake that teem with life, for wildlife as varied as grizzly and chipmunk, for waterways through which the world passes, for Great lakes, Rocky Mountains, Arctic ice, Blue skies, for all that we have seen and all that we have yet to behold, we give you thanks.

We praise you for the communities across this land, farms, villages, towns, and cities, for the ways Canadians have found to live as neighbours of one another.

We pray for the people of the First Nations in Canada in the east, west, plains, and North, for the hospitality of their ancestors, and their essential place among us today.

We pray for the founding people of English and French heritage, for their willingness to create a dominion unique in all the world.

We pray for the waves of immigrants who have each contributed substantial gifts in the creation of the multi-cultural nation that we so greatly enjoy today. We give thanks for the diversity of colour and culture and custom in Canada that only serves to shape us more and more in your image.

We pray for the newest Canadians, those who have just arrived, who struggle to find a place, a strive to learn a new language, who dream of a life for their children that was not possible elsewhere.

We pray for the mercy that has long been a feature of this land, a willingness to look to the good of others and set aside the offences of the past so that all may look to a new day.

God, there is blessing from you in every land. Accept the prayers we offer for Canada today that our hearts may be filled with thanksgiving even as we work together to address the needs that require our compassion. In the name of the One under whom every nation will one day gather, Jesus Christ, who is with us as we pray...OUR FATHER...

Be well, be safe, be hopeful.

Michael

Postlude

Listen to Carla and Brendan once more: [Lord of the Dance \(instrumental\)](#)