

A Service for Regional Council Sunday

Sunday, June 14, 2026

First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council



What is Regional Council Sunday?

Every year, ministers and delegates from every congregation across Newfoundland & Labrador gather virtually or in-person for the Annual Meeting of the First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council to do the work of the wider, regional church.

This year, ministers and delegates are meeting online on Wednesday, June 10 (Church Union Day). This means that unlike when we meet in-person, clergy may not necessarily be away from their congregations on Sunday, June 14.

However, we decided that we would still offer a liturgical resource to congregations this year. You may wish to use it on Sunday, June 14, or you may wish to use this resource on another Sunday, perhaps on a day when you ministry personnel and/or delegates highlight the work of the Regional Council and the highlights from our meeting together on Wednesday, June 10.

We are pleased to be able to provide this service which congregations can use as is, or adapt for their context. We hope this is a helpful resource and gift to you. It is also a connection to the wider church to which we belong. As we meet online, we will remember all of the congregations and ministries that comprise our Regional Council, and our hope is that as you gather in your own communities you will remember your connection to the wider church as well, and the good work that we do together.

A big thank you to the members of our liturgy team for their input to this resource: Rev. Brian Hannon and Rev. Wayne Blackwood. As well, thank you to Rev. Elsie Squires, our President, for providing reflections on the theme *"Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch"* (Luke 5:4-7).

We hope that on Regional Council Sunday, you will remember and pray for the work of the wider church, and the greater United Church of Canada family to which we belong. There is a portion of this service where we invite each congregation to remember the where you are invited to covenant with the regional council. We hope this liturgical action will be a meaningful reminder to all of us of the shared work and ministry that we undertake together.

Blessings to you and your ministry,

Rev. Oliver Dingwell
Convenor, Liturgy Team

Regional Council Sunday – Order of Service

The Gathering

Call to Worship (*responsive*)

Christ calls to us from the shoreline of our lives:

“Put out into the deep water.”

**We have laboured long and have caught little,
Yet, at your word, we trust and let down our nets.**

Christ beckons us beyond the safety of the familiar,
into deeper faith, deeper hope, deeper love.

We will let down our nets, trusting in your promise.

When the nets are full and the boats begin to strain,
Christ is with us in abundance and grace.

We will not be afraid, for Christ calls us still.

Come, let us worship the One who calls us into the deep.

We come to follow, to trust, and to serve.

Opening Prayer (*together*)

Holy and Gracious God,

You call us to the water's edge,

and invite us to go out into the deep waters,
where faith is stretched and trust is tested.

Give us grace to trust your voice,

even when the night has been long and the nets seem empty.

Fill us with the courage to cast our lives wide
in service of the Gospel.

And when the catch is more than we can bear,
remind us that we do not labour alone,
but are held in your abundant love.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ,

the One who calls us into the deep. Amen.

Opening Hymn

“Jesus Calls Us, O'er the Tumult” (Voices United 562)

or

“All the Way My Saviour Leads Me” (Voices United 635)

or

“It's a Song of Praise to the Maker” (More Voices 30)

Invitation to Confession

Like those first disciples,

we sometimes hesitate when Christ calls us
beyond what is familiar and comfortable.

We cling to shallow waters, trust our own strength,
and grow weary when our efforts seem fruitless.

Yet Christ continues to call us into deeper faith, deeper trust, and deeper love.
Let us bring before God all that weights upon our hearts,
trusting in the mercy that never fails . . .

Prayer of Confession (*together*)

**God of mercy and transformation,
You call us into deep waters,
yet we prefer the safety of the shore.
You invite us to trust your abundance,
yet we cling to fears of scarcity.
You call us to cast our nets wide,
yet we limit our vision, withhold our compassion,
and resist the risks of discipleship.
Forgive us when we rely only on ourselves.
Forgive us when discouragement overcomes hope.
Forgive us when we fail to follow where Christ leads.
Renew our trust in your promises.
Strengthen our faith for the journey ahead.
Open our hearts to the work of your Spirit,
that we may follow Christ with courage and joy. Amen.**

Words of Forgiveness

Hear the good news:
The One who called weary fishers into deep water
still calls us today.
The One who filled empty nets with abundance
still meets us with grace.
God's mercy is deeper than our fears,
greater than our failures, and stronger than our doubts.
In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.
Thanks be to God! Alleluia!

Children's Time

Option 1: "The Puzzle of Church"

Theme: The Church is one big picture made of many pieces.

Props Needed: A simple jigsaw puzzle (ideally with large pieces and a clear image)

Talk: Show the kids a few puzzle pieces. Ask: "*Can you tell what the picture is?*" (Let them share their wonderings about what the picture might be be).

Explain that one piece on its own doesn't show the whole picture—but every piece matters.

Say: "This is like our church. Today, all across Newfoundland and Labrador, different churches are gathering to worship. Each church is like one piece of a big puzzle. When we come together, we show the world something beautiful—God's love!"

Connection to the theme: We celebrate the wider the church and how each congregation, each person, each grown-up, each child, is an essential part.

Prayer: *(some congregations do this 'repeat after me style' after each line)*

Dear God,
We thank you today,
for our Church.
Help us to remember,
we are one puzzle piece,
in one great big picture,
and together we show,
the world your love. Amen.

or

Option 2: "Building the Church Together"

Theme: We all have a role to play in the church.

Props Needed: Building blocks (like LEGO or wooden blocks)

Talk: Start stacking a few blocks. Say: *"What happens if I try to build with just one or two blocks?"* (It falls over or stays small.)

Invite the children to each add a block to the structure, building something bigger.

Say: *"Each of us is important in God's church. The church is strong and beautiful when we all work together!"*

Connection to the theme: We remember the importance of community, and the shared ministry we have together, and belonging to the wider church (something bigger than ourselves).

Prayer: *(some congregations do this 'repeat after me style' after each line)*

Loving God,
Thank you for your Church,
and for all the people in it.
Thank you for making all of us,
a part of the Church,
with gifts to share.
Help us build your church,
With love and kindness,
so it will be strong! Amen.

The Word

Prayer for Illumination *(either together or read by one)*

O God, the Living Word,
as scripture is read and proclaimed this day,
open our hearts and minds by the power of your Spirit.
May we hear your voice in ancient stories

and find our place in your ever-unfolding work.
Speak, for your church is listening. Amen.

Scripture Readings

**Isaiah 6:1-8 or Genesis 12:1-9*

**Psalm 138 (Voices United pg. 860)*

**2 Corinthians 4:7-12 or Romans 5:1-5
Luke 5:1-11*

**some congregations read all four lectionary readings when they gather on Sunday so we have included them all here. The readings marked with an asterisk are optional, as the Luke passage is the primary focus passage for this service.*

Hymn

"Will You Come and Follow Me?" (Voices United 567)

or

"I Danced in the Morning/Lord of the Dance" (Voices United 352)

or

"Sign Me Up" (Then Let Us Sing 147)

or

"I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" (Then Let Us Sing 149)

Sermon **(see 'A Sermon for Regional Council Sunday' below)**

A New Creed (Voices United pg. 918)

Let us stand and confess the faith we share together,
as we say the words of the 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.**

The Covenant

Choose a leader in your congregation to lead this portion of the service and the following prayer, perhaps one of your Regional Council Delegates, the Chair of your Board or Church Council; or your Minister.

Covenanting Hymn

"The Church Is Wherever God's People" (Voices United 579)

or

"The Church's One Foundation" (Voices United 331)

or

"I, the Lord of Sea and Sky/Here I Am, Lord" (Voices United 509)

or

"Let Us Build a House" (More Voices 1)

Statement of Purpose

Christ's body is composed of many parts.

Christ has many ministries.

Some are easy, others are difficult.

Some bring honour, others bring reproach.

Some are suitable to our natural inclinations and temporal interests,
others are contrary to both.

Yet the power to do all these things is given to us in Christ, who strengthens us.

Today, as we gather here in worship, we gather collectively with all of the communities of faith within First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council.

As our leaders gather to plan and to take care of the business of this region, we are reminded that we are all part of this larger body
of The United Church of Canada.

Therefore, as we gather here today we reaffirm
the covenantal relationship that we have with each other.

Let us pray together . . .

**We the people of _____ United Church
renew our covenant of mutual responsibility
with the First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council
of The United Church of Canada.**

**We will seek after God in all we say and think and do
and live in communion with God and each other.**

**We will search for what God wants through Prayer, in Scripture,
and by fellowshiping with each other
as we listen to God's voice speaking to us.**

**We will celebrate God's Presence through prayer and song,
through joys and sorrows, through Word and Sacrament.**

We will invite others to join us in our journey with God.

We will do all things for the glory of God and the good of God's World.

**We give ourselves to God and rededicate ourselves to live
in covenant as the people of God and the Living Body of Christ.**

To God be all glory, praise, honour and thanksgiving, now and forever.

Amen.

The Response

Offertory Invitation

As we gather in worship across our region, we remember that we are part of something bigger than ourselves—God’s church, alive in many places. With our gifts, we support the ministry of this congregation and the work we do together as a wider church family. Let us give with gratitude and generosity.

Offertory Hymn

“Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow” (Voices United 541)

or

“We Give You But Your Own” (Voices United 542)

or

“What Can I Do?” (More Voices 191)

Prayer of Dedication (together)

**Gracious God,
You fill our nets with more than we can imagine.
Receive these gifts, offered in gratitude for your abundance.
May these gifts be used to show your grace,
to mend what is broken,
and to bring hope where there is need.
Make of our lives an offering as well:
willing, courageous, and faithful,
as we follow Christ into the deep waters of discipleship.
In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.**

Prayers of the People & The Lord’s Prayer

Let us pray for those who must in any way leave their comfort zones and launch out into unfamiliar and deep waters, saying, “Encourage and sustain them”.

For Clergy and Laypeople discouraged by declining numbers and resources,
congregations facing closure,
volunteers who cannot see any meaningful returns for their efforts and sacrifices,
that they may not abandon hope, but be open to new ways of being the Church,

Great Pilot, of our lives,
Encourage and sustain them.

For all who are setting out on new ventures in their lives,
the newly ordained,
Clergy seeking a new pastoral relationship,
Any who are contemplating a change in ministry focus or type,
Those contemplating retirement,
That they may have the vision and the courage to make these changes in course in
their lives,

Great Pilot of our lives,

Encourage and sustain them.

For all communities of faith in transition,
Those facing the end of a pastoral relationship,
Those seeking to issue a call or beginning a new pastoral relationship,
Those undertaking new ventures in ministry,
Those seeking ways to redevelop their properties,
Those contemplating closure,
That they may be able to let go of the past and embrace future possibilities,

Great Pilot of our lives,

Encourage and sustain them.

For all of Communities of Faith, Regional Councils and the General Council as we begin the Towards 2035 programme,
That all may see its potential, its necessity and its opportunities
For the practice of “Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship, Daring Justice”, in a perplexing and changing world.

Great Pilot of our lives,

Encourage and sustain them.

Great Pilot of our lives, you will be with us as we move out of our comfort zones and away from all that is familiar and comforting. We pray that led by your Holy Spirit we may possess the chart and compass to navigate the unfamiliar waters before us, avoiding rocks and shoals of nostalgia and until we find our new harbours as a Church and people as we seek to be Christ’s body and witnesses.

All this we ask in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who teaches us to pray together, saying:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Sending Forth

Closing Hymn

“I Feel the Winds of God Today” (Voices United 625)

or

“Jesus, Saviour, Pilot Me” (Voices United 637)

or

“He Leadeth Me” (Voices United 657)

or

“Will Your Anchor Hold?” (Voices United 675)

Commissioning and Benediction

Go forth from this place with faith.
When Christ calls you into deep waters,
do not be afraid.
When the nets seem empty,
trust in God's abundance.
When the way forward is uncertain,
follow the voice of Jesus.

So may the deep love of God surround you,
the bold grace of Christ encourage you,
and the daring call of the Holy Spirit lead you,
this day and forevermore. Amen.

AN OPTIONAL COMMUNION LITURGY BASED ON THE LUKE 5:4-7 THEME

INVITATION

This is the table of Jesus Christ: a table not of scarcity, but of abundance.

Here, Christ meets us as surely as he met the disciples by the sea
in the midst of our labour, in the weariness of our efforts,
and in the hope of something more.

He calls to us still: "Put out into the deep water."

Come, not because you are certain,
but because Christ invites you.

Come, not because you have everything figured out,
but because Christ calls you deeper.

Come and be nourished,
that you may cast your nets again
in faith, in hope, and in love.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts!

We lift them up to the Lord!

Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, God of all creation. You formed the seas and called them good. You set their boundaries and filled them with life. You called your people through waters: through the Red Sea into freedom, through the Jordan into promise. Again and again, you call us out of fear and into trust, out of scarcity and into abundance.

In Jesus Christ, you came among us, walking along the shores of our lives, calling ordinary people into extraordinary faith. When the nets were empty, he spoke a word of hope. When the catch was overwhelming, he revealed your abundance. Through his life, death, and resurrection, you have drawn us into the deep mystery of your love and called us to follow him.

And so, with all who have trusted your call, and with all who cast their nets in faith, we join our voices to proclaim the song of praise:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,

Heav'n and earth are full of your glory!

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest!

(or a sung Sanctus-Benedictus that is familiar to your community of faith)

Holy are you, O God, and blessed is your Son, Jesus Christ, who calls us beyond our limits and fills us with your life.

On the night before he died, Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to those who sat with him, saying: "Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Each time you do this, remember me."

In the same way he took the cup, saying: "Take, drink. This is my blood, poured out for you, for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, remember me."

In remembrance of these things, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving, as a living offering, as we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

(or a sung Mystery of Faith that is familiar to your community of faith)

Send, O God, your Holy Spirit, upon us and upon this bread and cup. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ. By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world. Give courage to your church and to those called to lead it, that we may go where you send us, trusting in your abundance. Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory is yours, God most holy, now and forever. **Amen.**

(or a sung Great Amen that is familiar with your community of faith)

THE LORD'S PRAYER

We gather these and all of our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, who teaches us to pray together to our Divine Creator, our Holy Parent, our Mother and . . .

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

The body of Christ, the bread of life; broken for you.
The blood of Christ, the cup of blessing; poured out for you.
These are the gifts of God for the people of God.
Come, for all things are now ready.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

**Gracious God,
At this table you have fed us with
the bread of life and the cup of salvation.
We have rested in the depth of your love.**

We have tasted your nourishing, nurturing grace.

We have felt your presence among us.

Send us forth from this table into the deep waters of the world:

to cast our nets with courage,

to trust your abundance,

and to serve with joy.

May what we have shared together this day,

strengthen our call and give us courage,

that together we may go into the world

and bear witness to your love and grace. Amen.

A SERMON FOR REGIONAL COUNCIL SUNDAY
(Based on Luke 5:4-7)
Written by The Rev. Elsie Squires

Sometimes life is good and we accomplish what we set out to do. Sometimes though, we don't make progress, and we get stuck. Have you been there? You do your best work and the results are zero. Have you ever been in the place where you cannot seem to get ahead and you want to give up?

Today's reading from St. Luke's Gospel begins with discouraged fishermen, who had fished all night and caught nothing. Jesus arrives and says to Peter: "Put out your boat into deeper water and let down your nets for a catch". Peter's reply is immediate, "It won't do any good; we have worked all night – and have caught nothing. There is no point to it".

The fishermen were hardworking; they had worked all night. I would think that they knew the ledges where the fish gathered, and the kind of weather and conditions that were good for catching fish. Jesus asks them to try again, but this time to move out further into the deep water. Although they are ready to give up, they do as Jesus said.

For a few moments, imagine that you are Simon Peter. Christ asks that you go out into the deep and let down the nets. What are you thinking as you venture out further into the deep water and toss the nets in and wait? You know that you have worked hard and have fished all night and have caught nothing, but Jesus asks you to move out into the deeper water and try again. Although you feel like giving up, you do as Jesus says. You begin to pull the nets back inThey are so heavy you can hardly pull them in and your heart beats faster and faster. With help, you haul the nets close to the boat. There is a huge catch. Everyone is surprised and can hardly believe what is happening.

What does this Gospel reading mean about how we live our lives? What does it mean about how we do things in the church? Sometimes when we work hard and do not achieve the intended results, we get frustrated. We are afraid to risk one more disappointment. When we are working hard to bring success, it is unlikely that we want to hear the words "try harder" or "try another way". When we are encouraged to do so, we may react like Peter and say: "that's very fine but we tried our best and it did not work, but we will do as you ask".

Jesus' advice was good for the disciples and it is good advice for the church today. There are times when doing something the way we have always done it will not work out. There are times when we will need to take the risk of deeper unknown waters.

When trouble and trials come and things are not working out for us, we need to look for another way. During Covid, we looked for ways to keep the church serving and thriving. Some succeeded by being creative and moving out into the unknown waters. We learned a lot about churches and we could truly sing that the church is

wherever God's people are praising, singing God's goodness for joy each day. The church is wherever disciples of Jesus tell his story and walk in his way. Yes, some people were brave enough to try another way to have "church" and for many, the on-line ministry and a new approach worked!

Christ makes a vital point for all of us. Notice he does not say: "Pull your nets in and forget about it". Christ does not say "Give up for today." Very directly, he says: "put out into the deep waters and let down your nets for a catch".

A new initiative in the United Church "Towards 2035" encourages us to try something new by moving out into the deep. Essentially, it encourages our churches to try something different to achieve success. The United Church of Canada knows that there are fewer people worshipping and volunteering. There are fewer people giving to and participating in United Church ministries and it is happening at every level: congregation, camp, campus, and council.

"Towards 2035" envisions a future where the United Church thrives through a strong denominational identity characterized by cooperation and collaboration. It does not mean that our approach did not work in the past, because overall, there was much success. However the reality is that times have changed with aging, and declining membership resulting in the closure of many church buildings. We need to reflect on the present and on the future of the Church.

"Towards 2035" imagines a future – one in which bold inspired communities of disciples share their faith and build community with their neighbours. It envisions a future where cooperation makes a shift from congregations and ministries struggling on their own to ones that discern ways to thrive together. Setting aside some of our ties to the familiar may open us to new ways where amazing results may be possible. We are to look for solutions as we trust in God's guidance. In putting out from the shore, we may sometimes find ourselves out of the familiar and out of our comfort zone. However we are not to give up. We work and minister together to become a bold, connected and evolving Church.

Let us do our best to meet with today's challenges and changes. May our churches be hope-filled communities of faith united by a deep spirituality, inspiring worship and daring justice. Our needs may vary from church to church, and from pastoral charge to pastoral charge. Let us consider what the deep water is for our churches. We may need to move from the familiar and let down our nets for a catch. As we do so, may our nets come up with good abundant results. Amen.