“What Matters Most?”

Exodus 32:1-14 & Phil. 3:4b-14 ~ *October 4, 2026 ~ Trinity United ~ Rev. G. Scott Turnbrook.*

A teacher once stood before a group of people with a large glass jar on the table. Beside it sat a collection of large rocks, a bowl of pebbles, a container of sand, and a jug of water. “Today, we are going to talk about making room for everything that matters.” The teacher began placing the large rocks into the jar until no more would fit. Turning to the group, she asked, “Is the jar full?” It certainly looked full. She next picked up a bowl of pebbles and carefully poured them into the jar. “Now is it full?”. The teacher reached for the sand. Slowly, pouring it into the jar the fine grains filled the tiny spaces between the rocks and pebbles. “Now is it full?” Surely there could not possibly be room for anything else! Then the teacher picked up the jug of water and began pouring. The water rose through the sand, filling the remaining spaces until it reached the top of the jar. “There…Now it is full.” So, what does this teach us? If we had put the sand in first, there would not have been room for the larger rocks. The order matters. The rocks represent the things that matter most: our relationships, our faith, our family, our health, our deepest values. The pebbles represent the things that matter, but perhaps a little less. The sand represents all the small tasks, distractions, and demands that fill our days. And the water? The water reminds that life has a way of filling every available space (if we let it)! The question is not whether we can fit everything into the jar. The question is whether we have made room for what matters most.

This is a good exercise for a church community who looks toward the future. There will always be more to do: things we can do, needs to meet, tasks to complete, more demands on our time and resources. There will always be another: meeting, project, maintenance issue, event to organize. There will always be things competing for our attention. The task at each new chapter is to discern, as a community, what matters most as we follow Christ into the future. We need to ask ourselves: What are our big rocks? What matters most? And are we making room for those things first?

This morning, our scripture readings invite us to consider that very question. They come from two very different moments in the biblical story. In Exodus, the people of Israel have lost sight of what mattered most. The Exodus story picks up from last Sunday as the Hebrews are in the wilderness. Moses has now gone up the mountain to receive the commandments of God. The people have been waiting for him, but Moses has been gone for a long time. Their anxiety grows. They become impatient. They begin to wonder whether Moses is ever coming back. So, they approach Aaron (Moses’ older brother) and ask him to make them a god who will lead them. They gather their gold, melt it down, and fashion a golden calf. And then they begin to worship it.

It is easy for us to hear this story an offer our judgement. They have witnessed the plagues in Egypt, walked through the waters of the Red Sea, experienced God's liberation and provision. To be sure, they have seen extraordinary things. Yet, here they are, making a golden calf. But, perhaps, the story is not as distant from our lives as we might imagine. The Israelites are frightened; uncertain about the future. They want something they can see, touch, control. They want reassurance. They want a ‘god’ who will be available on their terms, a god who who will make the uncertainty of the wilderness feel a little less frightening. And so they take something valuable: gold…and turn it into something that gives them a sense of security. Perhaps if you were among the Israelites in the wilderness ‘golden calf worship’ might make sense as well?

The golden calf is a reminder of how easy it is to lose sight of what matters most. We can become so focused on what we can see, what we can measure, and what we can control that we forget the deeper source of our life and hope. Churches can do this…We can become so focused on our building that we forget WHY we have a building. We can become so concerned about preserving our programs that we forget THE PEOPLE those programs are meant to serve. We can become so preoccupied with our finances that we forget the PURPOSE for those resources.

These things OF COURSE matter: buildings matter. Programs matter. Finances matter. The practical work of keeping a congregation going matters. These are not unimportant things. They are part of the stewardship of a church. But they are not the golden calf. They are not the object of our worship. They are resources that help

us live out our faith. The question is whether our resources are serving our deepest values, or whether our deepest values have become servants of our resources. Today is the day to ask 'What Matters Most?'

And that brings us to Paul. In Philippians, Paul looks back on his life and reconsiders the things he once believed most important. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul reflects on the things that once gave him a sense of identity and worth. He speaks about his heritage, his religious credentials, his accomplishments, and his standing within his community. By the standards of his time, Paul had an impressive résumé. He had the right background, the right education, the right commitments, and the right credentials. These were his big rocks. But then Paul encounters Christ. And that encounter changes how he sees everything. He writes that the things he once considered GAIN he now regards as LOSS because of Christ. He is not saying that his history no longer matters, or that everything he once believed was worthless. Rather, he has discovered a new centre for his life. His identity is no longer built upon his accomplishments or his status. The big rocks are his relationship with Christ.

There is a beautiful humility in that. Paul does not claim to have everything figured out. He does not say that he has reached the finish line. He says, in fact, that he is still on the journey. And that is a helpful image for us as a congregation. We are not a finished product. We are a community still learning, still growing, still discovering what faithfulness looks like in this particular place and time. Paul reminds us that faithfulness is not about clinging to the things that once defined us. It is about continuing to discover what matters most as we follow Christ into the future.

And that brings us to the question before us today: What matters most? For Trinity, what are the big rocks? What are the things that we want to make sure have room in the jar? They might be welcome, spiritual depth, care, community, compassion, justice, (and so many other responses you might offer). That will be the essence of your response to the first question. **What is the most important thing you value about Trinity United Church?** I know you might wish to fill in more than one thing, but remember the Hebrews had only one calf they worshipped. Take time this week and distill your response down to one thing you value.

Today is World Communion Sunday. This, more than any other Sunday in the year, we are invited to widen our perspective. Christians around the world gather at the table: different traditions, languages, cultures, and histories. Yet we gather around the one table, remembering the same Christ, sharing the same bread and cup. The table reminds us that Trinity United is part of something much larger than itself. And as we think about the second questions, we are reminded that we are not simply a congregation trying to sustain its own life. We belong to the worldwide body of Christ. Our faith connects us with people we may never meet, communities whose stories we may never hear, and neighbours whose needs may be very different from our own. And that changes the question of what matters most, doesn't it?

It asks us to look beyond, "What do we want for our church?" and to ask, "What does our community need from our church?" It invites us to consider how our resources might become a blessing—not only to those who already belong here, but to those who have not yet found a place, to those who are struggling, and to the wider community we are called to serve. The second question is one of future discernment: **What is the key direction you believe should guide our ministry as we look beyond ourselves?** A church can become very good at filling its own jar: activities, meetings, traditions, and responsibilities. The question is whether we have made room for the things that matter most to God. What are the big rocks that will guide our future? Are they: the people who are lonely; the families who are struggling; the young people searching for meaning and belonging; those wounded by religion. The second question asks what would it mean for Trinity to arrange our life around those big rocks?

So, over the next two Sundays, you are invited to share your two responses through the feedback form. If you are online, email them in or call them in. As we come to an end of our conversation, we return to the jar. The rocks go in first. The things that MATTER MOST must have room. Everything else finds its place around them. As we look toward the future of Trinity United, may God guide us to be clear about our big rocks, making room for what matters. Amen.

LITURGY ~ October 4, 2026

Leader(s)	Confirm	Liturgical Section	Notes	Powerpoint Notes
Musician		Prelude	Commence 9:55 - ish	Theme image
Musician		VU 412 “This is the Day”		All verses of song
Scott		Opening Welcome Land Acknowledgement		-Opening Welcome -Land Acknowledgement
		Christ Candle lighting		Christ Candle lighting
Cdn Food Grain Joanna R intro		Video #1		Video embedded in PPT
Scott		Announcements Stewardship		-Announcements -“Stewardship” slide
Scott		Sunday Theme		Theme image
Scott		Call to Worship		Responsive…See further down in this document.
Musician		MV 1 “Let Us Build a House”		
Scott		Opening Prayers		Prayer image
Scott		Passing the Peace of Christ	Give a few minutes here plz	The Peace of Christ be with you **And also with you**
Musician		VU 375 “Spirit of Gentleness”	Allow for a few mins before gathering back	All verses of song
???		Scripture Readings: Exodus 32:1-14 *Golden Calf worship* Phil. 3:4b-14 *Things once valued*		
Scott		Reflection		“What Matters Most” Theme image as below
Musician		We Are One VU 402 v 1 - 3		3 verses leading us to communion
Scott w’ children		Holy Communion (spoken) Lord’s Prayer		
Musician		VU 649 “Walk with Me”		
Scott		Blessing		
Musician		Postlude		Special notation: “Canadian Food Grain donation jars available in the Narthex (lobby) after the service”

Image for Scott's Reflection (for bulletin cover and Powerpoint slide)

COMMUNION LITURGY for PPT

*Nice communion image to start

*below slides as written (with or without a communion image – as it best suits)

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to God.

Let us give thanks to God.
It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Why do we give thanks and praise at this table?
…we praise you, O God
We praise you, O God

We think of God's Creation that continued
…We praise you O God
We praise you, O God

We give thanks that God is with us always.
We praise you, O God.
We praise you, O God

God came as one of us,
…We praise you, O God
We praise you, O God

Why do we eat bread at this table?
…we praise you, O God
We praise you, O God

Why do we drink from the cup at this table?
…we praise you, O God.
We praise you, O God

What do we remember at this table?
…together as we say:
Christ has died.
Christ has risen.
Christ will come again

For whom do we pray at this table?
We pray for**…**

The Prayer of Jesus

Our Mother/Father/Creator in heaven, hallowed be your name.
your kin(g)dom come, your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread,
forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil
for the kin(g)dom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and forever.
Amen

*Nice communion image on screen for time when people receive holy communion

How do we end Communion time?
…We come to an end by beginning again
May it be so.
Amen.

Call to Worship

We gather from many places,
bringing our stories, our questions,
and our hopes.

We come to remember what matters most:
the love of God, the grace of Christ,
and the gift of community.

When we become distracted by what we possess,
what we achieve, or what we have always known,
God calls us back to what is essential.

Turn our hearts toward you, O God,
and help us recognize the treasures
that truly give life.

Today, at Christ's table, we remember
that we belong to a worldwide family
expansive beyond own congregation.

From every nation and generation,
we gather as one body,
united in Christ's love.

As we worship, may we discover
what is worth carrying into the future
and what God is calling us to become.

Let us worship God,
whose love is our greatest treasure
and whose grace leads us forward.

"TBD"

Exodus 32:1-14

In the first reading, Moses is on Mount Sinai preparing to receive the 10 commandments.
Meanwhile, the Israelites grow impatient and create a golden calf to worship.
Having lost sight of the God who led them out of Egypt,
they turn toward something they can see and control.
Reading from the book of Exodus chapter 32, verses 1 through 14…

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain,
the people gathered around Aaron and said to him,
"Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses,
the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt,
we do not know what has become of him."

2 Aaron said to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives,
your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me."
3 So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears and brought them to Aaron.
4 He took these from them, formed them in a mold,
and cast an image of a calf, and they said,
"These are your gods, O Israel,
who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it, and Aaron made a proclamation
and said, "Tomorrow shall be a festival to the Lord."
6 They rose early the next day and offered burnt offerings
and brought sacrifices of well-being,
and the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to revel.

7 The Lord said to Moses, "Go down at once!
Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely
8 they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them;
they have cast for themselves an image of a calf
and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said,
'These are your gods, O Israel,
who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!' "

9 The Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are.
10 Now let me alone so that my wrath may burn hot against them
and I may consume them, and of you I will make a great nation."

11 But Moses implored the Lord his God and said,
"O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people,
whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?(

12 Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them
in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth'?
Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind
and do not bring disaster on your people.

13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants,
how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them,
'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven,
and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants,
and they shall inherit it forever.' "

14 And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

Philippians 3:4b-14

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he reflects on the achievements, credentials, and traditions that once defined his life.
Through his encounter with Christ,
he discovers a new understanding of what truly matters.
Reading from Philippians chapter two, verses 1-13…

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more:
5 circumcised on the eighth day,
a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin,
a Hebrew born of Hebrews;
as to the law, a Pharisee;
6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church;
as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

7 Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ.
8 More than that, I regard everything as loss
because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things,
and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ
9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own
that comes from the law but one that comes through faith in Christ,
the righteousness from God based on faith.

10 I want to know Christ
and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings
by becoming like him in his death,
11 if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead

12 Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal,
but I press on to lay hold of that for which Christ
has laid hold of me.

13 Brothers and sisters,
I do not consider that I have laid hold of it,
but one thing I have laid hold of:
forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead

14 I press on toward the goal,
toward the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

Prelude & Opening Song "This is The Day"

Good morning, and welcome to Trinity on this World Communion Sunday.
This morning, more than any other,
is an opportunity to remember how we are connected through Christ.

Today, Christians around the world gather around tables:
Tables of many shapes and sizes,
speaking many languages and coming from many different traditions,
yet we share ONE bread and ONE cup
and remember the love of Christ that binds us ALL together.

I sometimes wonder if Jesus would lament the growing divisions in our world
And in our churches?
Don't you?

So, our welcome, is ESPECIALLY important on a Sunday called WWC
For all are welcomed and loved by God
God celebrates the rainbow colours of creation
in which all God's children are painted
The varied expressions of our gender id & human sexuality
All love and welcomed and part of God's family.

Welcome just as you are…BECAUSE of who you are…welcome.

Land Acknowledgement

As we unite for worship, we acknowledge that we gather on the unceded trad'l lands
of the Syilx people of the OK nation who have stewardship of this land.

As you know, Wednesday was the Nat'l Day for TRC
And we took time to learn and lament and dream of future
Of healing…of respect…of hope
THAT is the ongoing work of reconciliation
And we continue that as ind'ls/ church / denom

Christ Candle lighting

*Kids up & Joanna Rainer

Canadian Food Grains – (Joanna Rainer intro)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PPL Up

-**REFRAME CTTEE ~** October 4th (after worship)

OCT ~ Canadian Food Grains Bank ~ Focus on learn thru October
Distributing donation jars
Oct 18th ~ BBQ invite the comm in!
Welcome – UPPER ROOM

Wild Church

Pop-Up Choir ~ Thanksgiving

Back of Bull!!!
MANY Programs! Life of TUC
NEED YOU – participate / start new!!!

STEWARDSHIP

GRATITUDE CARDS: Sunday School & Diana Ward are working spec for October. Write what you are grateful for on the cards provided and put them into the blue box labeled "Gratitude" that will be in the Narthex during coffee time.

SUNDAY THEME ~ Rachel Held Evans (1981–2019)

What Matters Most

When the noise of life grows quiet,
and the clutter falls away,
we pause beside the questions
that wait for us each day:
What matters most?
Is it what we build and gather,
the treasures we possess,
the names upon our doorways,
the measure of success?
What matters most?
Perhaps it is the table
where every place is set,
the welcome freely offered,
the stranger not forgotten yet.
What matters most?
Perhaps it is the listening
when someone needs to speak,
the hand that reaches outward
toward the lonely and the weak.
What matters most?
Perhaps it is the courage
to loosen our control,
to trust the God who calls us
beyond what we can know.
What matters most?
It is love that keeps on widening,
a mercy deep and wide;
it is Christ among us,
and Christ who walks beside.

So, as we face tomorrow,
with its questions yet unknown,
may we make room for what gives life,
and let these words in our hearts be known:
What matters most?

Call to Worship

Song "Let Us Build A House"

Opening Prayer

Loving God, we gather today with gratitude for this community of faith
and for the larger family of Christ that surrounds us around the world.
Only you know the struggles and surprises we carry
And so we humbly come before you offer this humble time of worship

In the midst of all the demands, decisions, hopes, and uncertainties of life,
help us to pause and listen for your voice.
Give us wisdom to recognize what truly matters,
courage to let go of what no longer serves your purposes,
& faith to make room for the things that are most important to U.

As we prepare to gather at your table with Christians everywhere,
remind us that we belong to something larger than ourselves.
Open our hearts to the needs of our neighbours and our world.
And **guide** Trinity as we continue to discern the path ahead,
that our resources, our gifts,
and our life together
may become a blessing beyond these walls.

May Christ be our centre,
may love be our guide,
and may your Spirit lead us into the future. Amen.

Passing of the Peace of Christ

Song "Spirit of Gentleness"

READINGS ~ Greg Milne

Reflection

Song after Sermon: "We Are One"

Pastoral Prayers & (spoken) Lord's Prayer

Gracious and loving God, we come before you today
aware that we are part of a story much larger than ourselves.
We give thanks for the gift of this community,
for the people who have welcomed us,
encouraged us, challenged us, and walked with us.

We give thanks for the many ways we are nourished by your Spirit and by one another.
We look beyond ourselves because you are a God who invites us into kin-ship

As we approach the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation,
we pray with humility.

We remember the children who were taken from their families and communities
and the deep wounds caused by residential schools and colonialism.
We remember those who never returned home,
those who carry the effects of these experiences across generations,
and survivors whose stories continue to call us toward truth.

We pray for Indigenous families, communities,
Elders, Knowledge Keepers and leaders.
May they know respect, strength, healing and solidarity.

God of reconciliation, forgive us for the times we have been unwilling to listen,
for the times we have been comfortable with too little knowledge,
too little action, or too little courage.

Help us resist the temptation to think that reconciliation is someone else's work.
Teach us to listen before speaking,
to learn before assuming,
& to recognize that reconciliation requires relationship and honesty,
patience and ongoing action.

We pray for our wider community and for all who are carrying burdens today.
For those who are anxious about the future, grant courage and peace.
For those who are ill or recovering, bring healing and strength.
For those who are grieving, bring comfort.
For those who are lonely, create pathways toward connection.

SILENCE

The Jesus Prayer

Let us pray together in the words that Jesus taught us...

Our Mother/Father/Creator in heaven, hallowed be your name.
your kin(g)dom come, your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread,
forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil
for the kin(g)dom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and forever.
Amen

"Go Light Your World"