

**Order of Worship April 4, 2021  
Easter Sunday**

Prelude Connie MacEwen

Words of Welcome and Easter Lily Memorials

Good morning beloved of God. Welcome to church, this sacred and serious place. The dark sojourn to the cross of Jesus and all the meaning we have attached to it – the sacrifice, the price paid for our sins, the undeterred love of Christ, the solidarity of Christ with all the suffering ones in the world, Good Friday may be over, but the dark clouds of the pandemic still loom. More than ever we need this Easter morning reminding us God is the God of life. As Walter Brueggemann declares, “The core truth of our faith is this: the God of the gospel brings life out of death... The seal of the deal is Easter... death had no power over God’s will for life.”<sup>1</sup> God raised up Jesus from the dead!

Christ has risen! Christ is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Not only do our voices echo within these walls, those who have gone before us too, join in the song of praise – for they know so very much more having entered into the heavenly realm. We name those remembered in these trumpeting lilies...

May not only the fragrance and beauty of these lilies, but the light of the Christ candle remind of God’s presence with us.

Lighting of Christ Candle

One: We light this light

**All: in the name of the God who creates life  
In the name of Saviour who loves life  
In the name of the Spirit who is the fire of life.**

Opening Hymn: # 243 Jesus Christ is risen today

1. Jesus Christ is risen today, hallelujah! Our triumphant holy day, hallelujah!  
Who did once upon the cross, hallelujah! Suffer to redeem our loss, hallelujah!
2. Hymns of praise then let us sing, hallelujah! Unto Christ our heavenly King, hallelujah!  
Who endured the cross and grave, hallelujah! Sinners to redeem and save, hallelujah!
3. Sing we to our God above, hallelujah! Praise eternal as his love; hallelujah!  
Praise him all yet heavenly host, hallelujah! Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, hallelujah!

Call to Worship

Leader: This is the Good News –  
the grave is empty, God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

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<sup>1</sup> Brueggemann, Walter, Devotions for Lent: A Way Other Than Our Own.

**All: Hallelujah!**

Leader: This is the Good News –  
the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

**All: Hallelujah!**

Leader: Everyone who believes in Christ,  
receives forgiveness of sins through his name, and is made new.

**All: Hallelujah!**

Prayer of Praise and Adoration

God of life and love,

Maker of all things visible and invisible;

on the first day of creation, you spoke, and out of chaos came life; out of darkness came light.

On the first day of the week, you raised Christ from the tomb,  
and out of death came new life.

On the first day of this week, we gather in your name / we pause in our homes  
to rejoice in the power of resurrection and claim your gift of new life in the Spirit.

Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto you, O God,  
Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit, this day and always. Amen.

Ministry of Music: *This is the day* Duet: Iris and Jean

Community Looking Back ~ Looking Ahead

Again a word of welcome to all of you who have gathered here at the church. According to public health measures in this emergency brake time – religious services are allowed at 15% capacity with the practice of physical distancing. I am going to miss touching elbows on the way out but at least we can be here together though sitting apart. Let us turn and greet one another with a wave and the meeting of eyes.

Also a huge thank you to Dave and Jim who have put together these plexiglass barriers making possible duet singing with Iris and Jean! And a huge thank you to Jean and Iris for lending their voices to this Easter celebration. What a special day indeed to hear the harmony within these walls! Thank you also to Connie and Brian, to you ushers and the power point person, to Dr. Jim at the sound board, those who will stay to count the offering... all who have worked to make this day possible. Also for the Sundays in Lent, I am grateful for Dr. Jim and his contribution to the Lenten Learning Moments. On Thursday evening some of you joined in the watch the movie, Mary Magdalene – it was good to have your company.

Again the sun has risen and we have risen from sleep with breath and health and strength enough. All things considering, this is magnificent really, worthy of gratitude. Here is the gift of this day.

I wonder what it is you have been grateful for this past week... the blooming of spring flowers reminding the warmer weather is on its way, or the taste of fresh baking, the voice of a friend...

your turn at getting the vaccine! How has faith in God carried you this past week, when did beauty catch your breath, where has peace like a river attended the soul??  
Give thanks to God! And share the story with others!

Looking ahead:

Next week – is the second Sunday of April – and Dirk will be leading worship if we are still comfortable meeting – otherwise you will find his words in an email.

Session meets a week Tuesday – April 13

Annual meeting is coming up the last Sunday in April...

Let us stand for the singing of this next song, Hey now! Singing hallelujah!

Song: Hey now! Singing Hallelujah!

Chorus:

Hey now! Singing hallelujah! Hey now! The morning has come!  
Hey now! Singing hallelujah! The tomb was empty at the rising sun.  
Refrain repeated in the verse: Hey now, the tomb is empty.

#### LISTEN TO THE WORD

As we come to this time of hearing the Sacred text read and interpreted let us seek the help of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray.

Prayer of Illumination: Psalm 25:5

**Lead us in your truth, O God, and teach us, for you are the God of our salvation.  
For you we wait. Amen.**

Last week we read the story of Jesus suffering and death found in the Gospel of Mark. The account ended with Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James, watching as Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus down from the cross, wrapped him in a shroud, placed him in a tomb and sealed the entrance of the tomb shut with a large stone.

Scripture Reading: Mark 16:1-8

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" 4 When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was

crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” 8 So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Some months later, after Jesus has ascended into heaven and the church birthed on the day of Pentecost, the book of Acts tells this story of Peter. Even though the women left the empty tomb terrified and amazed, unable to speak may be the end of the gospel of Mark, it is not the end of the story.

Acts 10:34-43

34 Then Peter began to speak to them – that is the household and friends of the Gentile, Cornelius - : “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. 37 That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39 We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; 40 but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, 41 not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Sermon: Witnesses

Interesting. The same writer who begins the Gospel of Mark with, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," does not conclude with a good news ending. The good news of Jesus' resurrection is found in the other gospels. Easter morning in Mark begins much the same as Matthew, Luke and John. It is the first day of the week, after the Sabbath. The sun is beginning to rise. The women are headed to the tomb – Matthew omits the detail of taking along spices. As they make the journey they wonder about how they will move the stone. When they arrive, they discover the stone has been rolled away and they are met by at least one in dazzling white explaining Jesus has been raised from the dead. Come and see, then go and tell the others. In the other gospel stories that is what the women do. But here in Mark, the last words are “they said nothing to anyone because they were afraid.”

Editors, scribes, whose task it was to make copies of the original text would not have the gospel ending at verse 8. What kind of good news gospel story leaves the women fleeing and afraid, traumatized and ecstatic all at the same moment, unable to tell anyone? And so they added endings of their own. There is the shorter ending in which the women did tell those around Peter, and Jesus does show up. And there is a longer ending that reads kind of like the ending found in the gospel of Luke which was written years after the gospel of Mark. Check it out - you will find both of these endings added to Mark 16. For several reasons, biblical scholars agree that these endings were added much later.

While the editors – scribes way back when would not end the story in this way, modern scholars are much more open to ambiguity. One even suggests Mark is quite astute to end the story where he does. Of course, these friends of Jesus were afraid. Death is awful; especially a crucifixion, but at least we know what death is. Death leaves us in deep pain, but at least we know what to do next. Death is tragic, but at least we can understand that someone we loved has gone. Three grieving women come to the grave to complete the cleaning of the body for its burial; they come to do what you do next when someone has died. At the tomb, they meet a young man in a robe of white who tells them that their friend has been raised from the dead and is going ahead of them to Galilee, back where they all came from. How does one comprehend this kind of news? Either they are hallucinating or this young man is part of a conspiracy and has stolen the body or this really is a divine messenger and something as amazing as creation itself has just happened. Any way you look at it, they were bound to be terrified; amazed, to afraid to speak.

For once the writer does not say as it often does in Mark's gospel, "Immediately..." In a poignant kind of way, this ending does not rush on to the next place, the next event, but gives permission to sit in the midst of what is terrifying and amazing, unable able to speak. In an open kind of way, Mark's story invites us to stand where those first trembling witnesses stood. Those three women did not see Jesus. Neither do we. They did not hear Jesus call their names. Neither have we. They were not invited to touch his wounded hands. We have not touched Jesus' hands either. It is like Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome are silent sisters for all who would encounter God's huge surprise – the raising of Jesus from the dead. I wonder if this is Mark's way of saying: "This story is not over because we just never know where we are going to be the witnesses left terrified and amazed, blown away by God raising up life in the most unexpected places!"

Consider this story of Peter. If you had asked Peter a week earlier his views on Gentiles being included in God's kingdom, he would have made it very clear they were unclean and if they were to be included, they would have to become Jewish like he was. And then he has a vision – confusing, amazing. He could not have imagined the direction God was moving in, where God would show up next. And then comes the knock on the door. God raises up new life in Peter – and the next things we hear Peter telling the Gentiles God shows no partiality!

All down through the centuries, God keeps showing up, raising up life in places as good as dead, surprising, going in directions we could never have imagined. I suspect each of you have story

of being raised to life again in the hard stuff of life – that we can go on at all when the death of loved ones leave a huge gaping hole in our lives – this is really something. That we live in this time of pandemic and still breathe and hope and not be undone with worry and anxiety – this is really something. That in this time we are being transformed into more thoughtful, kindly people, acting for the well-being of others and not just ourselves, means something. The story of the pandemic is not over yet, who knows how God will raise up new life in us yet. In his book *God Help Us*, author Tom Harper writes, “What has always amazed and inspired me, both in my years in the parish ministry and ever since in journalism, is the way in which quite ordinary people can “rise again” from disasters or trials of all kinds and do extraordinary things.” He goes on to declare, “The deepest meaning of Easter is that the power to transcend our limitations, to be reborn in the face of any problem or tragedy, is available to those who seek it. This might be the greatest miracle of all.”

I arrived home the other day despairing. I had visited with a friend whose partner is gripped with addiction that leaves him and his family struggling in life. It feels pretty hopeless. Watching my step as I approached the deck stairs, off to the left, my eye caught the sight of green daffodil shoots erupting out of the clump of dark decaying leaves. It startled me at first – the bright green amidst the brown. At once I was reminded... life is stronger than death. Who knows how the God of life will raise up life in such a despairing place. The story is not over yet.

Mark’s story of Jesus has a beginning that does not end that first morning long long ago. The God who raised Christ from the dead is the same God able to raise up new life in each one of us too. Easter is a reminder that we just do not know where life is going to be raised up next! Easter is proof that we can never predict where God is going to act next, leaving us witnesses, terrified, amazed, and unable to speak!  
Amen.

#### RESPOND TO THE WORD

Silent Reflection and Prayer of Confession

Almighty God,

you raised Jesus from the grave, and shattered the power of sin and death.

But we confess that we remain captive to fear,

and bound to habits that hold us back from enjoying new life in Christ.

Indifference deadens our hearts, and we seek comfort rather than justice.

We cling to hurt, resentment, and disappointment and refuse the freedom that comes with forgiveness.

One: ...and so we pray.

**All: Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy,**

**Lord Jesus grant us your peace. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

The death and resurrection of Jesus is proof with God there is forgiveness. Where regret is real, pardon is granted. We are forgiven and set free to begin again – and if need be again, and again. Hallelujah! Amen.

Ministry of Music: *I do not know* Duet: Jean and Iris

#### Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Standing in front of the open clothes closet, Sally wondered aloud, “What shall I change into today?” Hearing her mother’s question, the four-year-old daughter responded, “How about a butterfly!”

Giving changes us too, it changes us from being greedy to being generous, from being afraid we will not have enough to trusting God will provide for all our needs. Let us be in the practice of giving and discover life lived more fully.

Let us pray.

Great is your faithfulness, O God, morning by morning new mercies we see. All we have need of your hand has provided. Great is your faithfulness. We trust in you. Amen.

Hymn: # 260 Alleluia, alleluia

Refrain: Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord;  
alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his name.

1. Jesus is Lord of all the earth; he is the King of creation:
2. Spread the good news o’er all the earth; Jesus has died and has risen:
3. We have been crucified with Christ; now we shall live forever:
4. Come, let us praise the living God, joyfully sing to our Saviour:

#### Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession concluding with the Lord’s Prayer

As beloved brothers and sister of Jesus Christ let us offer prayers of thanksgiving and intercession.

Living, uncontainable God,

because you made the world, and intended it to be a good place,  
and called its people your children;

because, when things seemed at their worst you came in Christ to bring out the best in us;  
so, gracious God, we declare

**All: Life is stronger than death. Love is stronger than hate**

**Truth is stronger than lies. Light is stronger than Darkness**

Because confusion can reign inside us, despite our faith;

because anger, tension, bitterness and envy distort our vision;

because our minds sometimes worry small things out of all proportion;

because we do not always get it right, only this do we declare

**All: Life is stronger than death. Love is stronger than hate**

**Truth is stronger than Lies. Light is stronger than Darkness**

Because you promised to hear us,  
and are able to raise up new life in us, and are willing to make our hearts your home,  
we ask you to confront, control, forgive and encourage us as you know best...

Then let us cherish in our hearts that which with our lips declare

**All: Life is stronger than death. Love is stronger than hate  
Truth is stronger than Lies. Light is stronger than Darkness**

In this moment of silence we lift up to you the unspoken concerns of our hearts...

We lift up to you this community of faith in the nominating and electing of new elders. May  
your spirit of wisdom and willingness attend us.

We pray for this weary world that you so love and that we are practicing to love too. Watch over  
those who are waiting and watching and weeping this day, tend your sick ones, rest your weary  
ones, bless your dying ones, soothe your suffering ones, shield your joyous ones, all for love's  
sake.

We pray in your name Jesus, in you who teaches us to pray 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 sins as we  
forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For  
thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever Amen.**

**Amen.**

Going Forth Hymn: # 248 At the dawning of salvation

1. At the dawning of salvation, in the morning of the world,  
Christ is raised, a living banner by the love of God unfurled.  
Through the daylight, through the darkness,  
Christ leads on his great array:  
all the saints and all the sinners he has gathered on his way.
2. He is risen in the morning; he is risen from the dead;  
he is laughter after sadness; he is light when night has fled.  
He had suffered; he has triumphed; life is his alone to give:  
as he gave it once, he gives it evermore, that we may live.
3. For the glory of salvation in the dawn of Easter day  
we will praise you, loving Father; we rejoice to sing and pray  
with the Son and with the Spirit. Lead us on, your great array,  
saints and sinners celebrating your triumphant love today.

Benediction



In work and worship **God is with us.**  
 Gathered and scattered, **God is with us**  
 Now and always **God is with us.**

Closing Song #819 Awake, arise, oh sing a new song  
 Awake, arise, oh sing a new song  
 of joy and celebration.  
 A new day has come; bring praise to the Son  
 of God, of God.

#### Announcements

Second Sunday worship will be led by Rev. Dirk Kramer

Session meets April 13 7:30. Zoom link will be sent out earlier in the day.

The nominating of elders continues until April 11 in preparation of the election of elders.

Annual Congregational Meeting is set for Sunday April 25 after worship ~ 11:30.

Lectionary Readings for April 11: Acts 4:32–35; Psalm 133; 1 John 1:1–2:2; John 20:19–31

#### Moment for Mission

##### Nourishing Body, Mind and Spirit

Food is central to fellowship, providing both physical and emotional nourishment. Not surprisingly, some of the ministries supported by gifts to Presbyterians Sharing share God's love through food. The Raw Carrot Soup Enterprise in Hamilton, Ont., provides nourishment with their homemade soup, while giving meaningful employment to people with disabilities and mental health illnesses. Cooking and nutrition workshops at Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre in Montreal, Que., help parents of young children open up as they discuss the challenges of parenting. Besides providing lunches at their drop-in centre, Kenora Fellowship Centre in Kenora, Ont., hosts a monthly Elder's Breakfast to show respect and care for elderly patrons, many of whom are survivors of Indian Residential Schools. These ministries are sharing the love of Christ through hospitality.