

Order of Worship April 18, 2021 3rd Sunday of Easter

Words of Welcome

Knock, knock.

Who's there?

Juanita.

Juanita who?

Juanita rejoice in the gift of this day!

Here we are still breathing, hearts still beating, God's goodness and mercy still pursuing us all the days of our lives, God still raising up life out of dark and barren places – every leaf in springtime is evidence of promised resurrection.¹

Welcome to these church words, beloved people of God. It is good for our souls to come away from the daily news and set our attention on the Maker and Keeper who is our refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble. May the Spirit inspire these words and nourish our souls.

While grandson Nolan once thought a candle lit at the supper table was for immediately blowing out like on a birthday cake, the rest of us are aware of its calming effect. Quieting. Focusing. May the lighting of a candle be a reminder of God's living presence within and all around.

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: # 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

¹ "Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection, not in books alone, but in *every leaf in springtime*." Martin Luther

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.

Call to Worship (based on Psalm 4)

Leader: God gives us room when we are in distress

People: God is gracious and hears our prayer.

Leader: So let us offer sacrifices of praise to God

People: and put our trust in the Lord, who keeps us safe.

Prayer of Praise and Adoration concluding with the Lord's prayer

Here we are Trinity of Love, the saints and sinners you have gathered on your way;

the saints and sinners you have blessed with sun light after the darkness of night,

with springtime after winter,

with peace in the midst of confusion and distress,

with hope in this challenging time.

Here we are the saints and sinners you have called to be your church.

We long to be your faithful people, useful in this world that you so love.

So we worship you this day, yearning for your presence,

trusting you are with us,

trusting you will keep us safe in whatever ills come our way,

trusting you hear our prayer,

trusting even as you Jesus, was raised to life, we will be raised to new life too.

With you is the fountain of life.²

It is in your name Jesus that we pray. Amen.

Community Looking Back ~ Looking Ahead

Again a word of welcome to these words of church that connect us even though scattered.

How is it possible for it to be already April 18th?!

The first Sunday of April came and went without inviting an opportunity to pass along a blessing to all you folks who are celebrating in April – So, God's blessing to you who are eating birthday and anniversary cake this month!

I am wondering what else the month of April has held for you folks. Some outside work or a walk around the block? Vaccinations? Cleaning windows? Doctor appointments? A good book? A surprising phone call? Zooming with family and friends? New grandbabies or great grands? The sorrow of death in the family circle? Mounting concern of Covid 19 numbers in the area? An awareness of God's glory? The whole earth is full of God's glory.

Financial Report: Average giving in the month of March for the past 3 years: \$10,100.

March 2021: \$10, 887. Well done!

² Psalm 36:9

Song: Although the tune of this next song is not familiar, the poetry of this prayer is beautiful. Colourful Creator, God of mystery, #317 in the Book of Praise is written by Ruth Duck.

1. Colourful Creator, God of mystery, thank you for the artist teaching us to see glimpses of the meaning of the commonplace, visions of the holy in each human face.
2. Harmony of ages, God of listening ear, thank you for composers tuning us to hear echoes of the Gospel in the songs we sing, sounds of love and longing from the deepest spring.
3. Author of our journey, God of near and far, praise for tale and drama telling who we are, stripping to the essence struggles of our day, times of change and conflict when we choose our way.
4. God of truth and beauty, Poet of the Word, may we be creators by the Spirit stirred, open to your presence in our joy and strife, vessels of the holy coursing through our life.

LISTEN TO THE WORD

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.

Responsive Reading: Psalm 4

Answer me when I call, O God of my right!

You gave me room when I was in distress.

Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.

² How long, you people, shall my honor suffer shame?

How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies? *Selah*

³ But know that the LORD has set apart the faithful for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him.

⁴ When you are disturbed or angry, do not sin; ponder it on your beds, and be silent. *Selah*

⁵ Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD.

⁶ There are many who say, "O that we might see some good! Let the light of your face shine on us, O LORD!"

⁷ You have put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and wine abound.

⁸ I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O LORD, make me lie down in safety.

Scripture Reading: Luke 24:36-48.

The gospel reading this morning comes from Luke. It is the evening of the first day of week.

Early that morning women had gone to the tomb where Jesus was buried and found it empty.

Men in dazzling white told them Jesus was risen. The disciples however did not believe them,

saying it is only an idle tale. Peter went to see for himself and found it as they had said. We pick

of the story just as the two people returned from Emmaus all excited about their encounter with the risen Lord. Let us listen for a word from God.

36 While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." **37** They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. **38** He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? **39** Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." **40** And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. **41** While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" **42** They gave him a piece of broiled fish, **43** and he took it and ate in their presence.

44 Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." **45** Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, **46** and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, **47** and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. **48** You are witnesses of these things.

The Word of God for you people of God. Thanks be to God.

Sermon: Resurrection Hope.

There is no getting around it. The death and resurrection of Jesus are foundational to the Christian faith. So while the rest of the world moves on, it should be no surprise here at church we are still in the season of Easter. The Lectionary Gospel reading for today still finds us back there on that first day of the week when the tomb was discovered empty. It is right that we should remain here for a good while, examining, pondering, exploring the story of Christ's rising to life again. It is the story of how death does not have the last word, of how out of endings, comes the promise of life, of life being raised up again. The promise of life rising up out of endings, is the source of hope. Hope is what makes us an Easter people. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" The Apostle Peter writes in 1 Peter 1:3, "By God's great mercy, God has given a **new birth into a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Jesus' resurrection is proof the God of life is stronger than the sting of death.

When we are distressed by change required of us, the shattering of dreams, the poor prognosis, the pain of broken relationships because of something we said or did or something that was done or said to us, even pandemic lockdown requirements – how will our families ever make it through 6 weeks of staying in our own households – God is at work raising up new life; God is a refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (Ps 64:1) To quote Nadia Boltz Weber in her book, *Pastrix*, "It happens to all of us... God simply keeps reaching down into the dirt of our

humanity and resurrecting us from the graves we dig for ourselves through our violence, our lies, our selfishness, our arrogance, our addictions. And God keeps loving us back to life over and over and over.” In times of distress, hope in God’s promise of life rising up again, of being loved back to life, can make all the difference.

That is what Jesus was doing there on the evening of the first day of the week; Jesus was there graciously loving his followers back to life again. There they are together, unable to believe the story of the women who returned from the tomb early that morning saying Jesus has risen. To them it was an idle tale. How could it be possible – death is death is death. And then Cleopas and his traveling companion arrive back from Emmaus, breathless, to tell them, Jesus is alive. And then Jesus stands among them. Needless to say they are greatly distressed; “startled,’ ‘terrified,’ ‘frightened,’ ‘doubtful,’ ‘in their joy, disbelieving.’ These descriptive words give us a glimpse of the depth of their distress. And then he invites them to look at his hands and feet and see, to touch his body and see – ghosts do not have flesh and bones. He asks for something to eat so they can see he has a mouth and teeth, an esophagus and stomach, intestines - all the inner organs necessary to digest food. He is not a ghost; ghosts do not eat. Jesus loves them back to life in a very hands on, tactile way. Through senses of seeing and touching, hearing his voice, the disciples experience the risen Jesus. God reached down into the dirt of their humanity and raised them up from graves of disbelief and fear to become witnesses of the things God is up to! It made all the difference – their witness reaching all the way down through history, even to us in this time and place.

Let us pin our hope on the God who saves us and loves us back to life over and over. Especially in this time of pandemic wilderness where the wild beast of a virus roams and the days are filled with uncertainty and distress, let us pin our hope on God.

Son Ben and family are moving. While the house they are moving to is largely renovated there was still a couple bedrooms on the second floor that needed the lath and plaster pulled out. So the other Monday morning I was waiting in line at Hanover Home Hardware for curbside pick up of face masks in preparation for the work. Behind me was an older woman, dressed in capris and a patterned tee shirt. The hard clear plastic form of a mask covered her mouth. Striking up a conversation I said to her, “This pandemic is teaching us patience, eh?” By her response I could tell she was not into practicing patience. “This is ridiculous,” she said, “that we have to wait in line here when people can walk right into alcohol and cannabis stores.” Unsure of how to respond to her complaint, I said nothing and I might have remained that way if it hadn’t occurred to ask if she had booked in for getting the vaccine. Hanover is well organized in its vaccination program. “No,” was her reply and neither was she planning to get vaccinated; “You just don’t know what is in that stuff.” She went on to tell of how she personally knew someone who died after two weeks of receiving a second shot. It didn’t occur to me to remind her thousands of people are dying without the vaccine too. In defence of vaccinations, I responded, “The vaccines seem to be protecting the elderly in places of long-term care.” The conversation came to an end with the red shirted store employee asking what it was we wanted to purchase.

There we were, the two of us on very different sides of thinking about public health restrictions and vaccines. I do not know if she wants to do better than complain and be suspicious about vaccines, but I want to do better. Defensiveness shuts down curiosity and compassion. This pandemic is soul-shaping. Will it shape us into better people or bitter people? Will our differences divide, or will our common humanity bring us together? How would the conversation have gone differently if I had responded, "I am sorry to hear of the death of this one you knew..."? I don't know. How would you have responded?

We are an Easter people, given a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The God of life is stronger than the sting of death. Jesus comes, loving us back to life over and over. In this time of soul-shaping pandemic, let us put our hope in God and wait; those who wait for God shall renew their strength.
Amen.

RESPOND TO THE WORD

Silent Reflection Take a few minutes to sit quiet with these sermon words. What catches your attention? Is there a new thought, a new perspective? What is worth hanging onto? Is there anything lacking? What more would you add?

Prayer of Confession

We confess O God, there are times we find ourselves in life-stealing graves of worry and fear, anxious about what the future holds when you invite us be present in this moment, in this day. WE confess there are times we are defensive and critical of those who think differently, indifferent to the suffering of others.

One: ...and so we pray.

**All: Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Lord Jesus grant us your peace. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

God does not write us off, but gives us room in our distress and graciously hears when we call out. Where regret is real, pardon is granted. With God there is forgiveness and we are set free to begin again and again and again. Thanks be to God.

Offering

There was a man, some called him mad,
But the more he gave the more he had.

It is true. We cannot outgive God in giving. Let us be intentional in our giving this week.

Prayer of Dedication, prayers of thanksgiving and intercession, the Lord's Prayer
As the beloved of God, let us offer prayers of dedication, thanksgiving and intercession.

Life-giving God, we give thanks for the gift of this day and the many ways our lives are blessed in it. We give thanks for having enough to share – enough resources, enough energy, enough skills, enough time. Bless us in our giving. Bless others in the receiving.

God our Maker,
 Source of Easter power and hope,
 You have walked with your faithful people through many generations,
 people facing challenge and uncertainty,
 people seeking your purpose and promise.
 We still face challenges and uncertainty, even with Easter in our hearts.
 Walk with us and with those for whom we pray for this day,
 so that your resurrecting power may lead us in lives of faithfulness.
 In the name of Christ our Risen Lord,
All: Hear our prayer.

We pray for children and young people
 who must think about the future in uncertain times
 facing threats new to this generation like the pandemic and climate change.
 Give them hope rooted in the knowledge that their lives matter to you.
 Show them how to make a difference in the world,
 whatever threats they face as they grow.
 In the name of Christ our Risen Lord,
All: Hear our prayer.

We pray for people for whom age or experience, illness or disability
 create barriers to full participation in your world.
 Surround each one in pain or despair with your comfort
 and renew in each one a sense of dignity and purpose.
 Show them how much they matter to you and to us.
 In the name of Christ our Risen Lord,
All: Hear our prayer.

We pray for all those facing grief and loss in these difficult days
 when it is still so hard to gather for support.
 Stay with those who must rearrange their lives without their beloved.
 Give them strength and comfort through your promise of resurrection.
 We pray for communities challenged by forces beyond their control—
 natural disaster, political strife and the economic consequence of the pandemic.
 Give courage to those facing challenges, and wisdom to those who lead,
 so that well-being may be restored soon
 and hope for the future prevail.
 In the name of Christ our Risen Lord,
All: Hear our prayer.
 As Earth Day approaches this week,

we remember before you the struggles within your creation,
 creatures losing habitat, unique species dying out, oceans filled with plastic,
 the climate warming and the havoc that results for all of us.

Jesus, you are the firstborn of all creation;

Help us to honour you by caring for the earth and its fragile balances
 in the ways we live and the priorities we set.

In these ways, too, we would be your disciples
 and so we pray as you teach us, 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.

Going Forth Hymn: #776 Jesus, life of all the world

1. Jesus, life of all the world, source and sum of all creation,
 Son of God and Son of Man, only hope of our salvation,
 Living Word for all our need, life you give is life indeed!

2. Life of freedom, gladness, truth, all our guilt and fear transcending;
 life that leaps beyond the grave. God's own life that knows no ending;
 life eternal, gift un-priced, freely ours in Jesus Christ!

3. Yours is life that makes us stand firm for truth, all wrong defying;
 yours the strength by which we strive, on your holy arm relying;
 yours the war we wage on sin, yours the power by which we win.

4. Jesus, life of all the world, you are Lord of every nation;
 by your Holy Spirit's power make your Church your incarnation
 till our lives of truth and grace show our world your human face!

Benediction

In work and worship **God is with us.**

Gathered and scattered, **God is with us**

Now and always **God is with us.**

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing,
 so that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

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.

Lectionary Readings for April 25:

Acts 4:5–12; Psalm 23; 1 John 3:16–24; John 10:11–18

Please be in touch if there are others you would like added to the prayer list.
519-321-1942.

Moment for Mission

Andrew and Flora successfully grow rice, cassava, maize and groundnuts on their two acres of farmland in Malawi as a result of adopting conservation agriculture practices to help their farm flourish and better cope with droughts. Last year, Andrew and Flora attended Presbyterian World Service & Development-supported training to learn how to rotate crops and protect the soil. In addition to conservation agriculture workshops, they also attended gender training where they learned the importance of working together. With these tools, Andrew and Flora now enjoy the rewards of conservation agriculture.