

April 11th, 2021 Second Sunday of Easter – Email/At Home Missal

A blessed Second Sunday of Easter to you, and thank you for joining us for worship, whether by print, email or Zoom. In the course of this week past 10 days, not only was the tomb found to be empty, but we also have come to a heightened state of confinement and isolation again due to increasing COVID-19 infection rates. As such perhaps many of us will be able to relate to the huddling of disciples and the unsureness of what the days ahead may bring. The Gospel always speaks to the reality of our lives, through the stories from two millennia ago and that never fails to encourage me in the knowing that God is with us ☺

The ZOOM link for today's service, which opens at 9.45 am on April 11th, 2021, can be found here

Sunday Worship Apr 11, 2021 09:45 am ZOOM room opens; service begins at 10 am.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89284931475?pwd=UjNVQ29ldTFHbGxTVm9ZN0VJY2lyQT09>

Meeting ID: 892 8493 1475

Passcode: 505480

You don't have to have a computer or internet to connect to any of our church Zoom services; you can also just call in on one of these numbers (long distance charges may apply):

1 587 328 1099 or
1 647 374 4685 or
1 647 558 0588 or
1 778 907 2071 or
1 204 272 7920 or
1 438 809 7799

As we proceed into the season of Easter during stay-at-home order, I am allowed to do wellness checks at your doorway/outdoors and walking visits (exercise) are available, telephone/video call visits and delivery of home communion kits including a dining table liturgy remain available. These are allowed during the Stay-at-Home order. Please contact the church office if you would like any of these ☺ Keep safe: distance, wash, mask and love each other.

With love, in Christ
Pastor Janaki.

Welcome remarks:

- Julianne & Heather have requested that we announce a very special anniversary coming up for Bob and Barb Burden who celebrate 50 years of marriage on Fridat April 16th ☺ If you are able to call or send an email or a card to them to celebrate with them, please do so ☺ We wish we could gather but alas, this is not allowed right now.

Our gathering hymn this morning is #777, Come to Me, All Pilgrims Thirsty

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XJvkWcHTyA>

Tune: Beach Spring; Text: Delores Dufner; Music: The Sacred Harp, Philadelphia, 1844; arr Selected Hymns 1985

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Greeting:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all, in your home and in mine.

Prayer of the Day: *Life-giving Creator, you enter our fearful, closed off spaces, bringing your peace, forgiveness and hope with you. You also send us from these spaces, to be disciples in the joint work of sharing your Kingdom. Give us courage and strength to follow Jesus when he comes to us, to send us forth. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen*

The Holy Gospel according to John 20:19-23

C: Glory to you O Lord.

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this,

he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." [NRSV]

This is the Gospel of our Lord. **C: Praise to you, O Christ.***

The Second Reading: 1 John 1:1,3,5-9

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

This is the message we have heard from God and proclaim to you, that God is light and in God there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with God while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. [NRSV]

Word of God, word of life. **C: Thanks be to God.**

Acclamation of the Word: Take, O, Take Me As I Am ELW 814

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mf3QHqQ-004>

Text & Tune: John L. Bell © 1995 WGRG, c/o Iona Community, Glasgow, Scotland WGRG, c/o Iona Community, Glasgow, Scotland Administrators; Wild Goose Resource Group Used by Permission, CCLI License # 11098609

The word of God from: Acts 4:32-35

C: Glory to you, O God.

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. (NRSV)

Word of God, word of life. **C: Thanks be to God.**

Message (Imagine Pastor Janaki's voice here ☺)

Many a time I have shared with you my experience of "coming to Christ" ... a more accurate way to put it would be my experience of Christ coming to me ... it was not a case of someone proselytizing or preaching at me, it was not a case of "back to church Sunday" where I was invited by someone ... rather it was a true and thrashing case of the dark night of the soul. I was in a fearful, hurt and even shameful state. So much so that I felt strongly suicidal. And I was not at the time, a believer in Jesus Christ as my salvation. But I believed in a kind of NO NAME God ... and I prayed earnestly like this: "God please show me whatever it is you need me to see." For a month I prayed in this way every night and on the last Friday night of that month, the revelation of Jesus descended on me ... there were no fireworks, there was no organ music, but my soul was re-ignited by the love God demonstrated in sending to us a Son, who would die for us, so that we could not ever be separated from God again.

I felt as though God had, through revealing Jesus to me in this deeply intimate way, in a time of my own soul's thrashing about, I felt as though God had plucked me from darkness, flipped on a big light switch, and in so doing brought me, through Jesus, into the light.

Because I had grown up in a "Christian" country, I decided to go to church and ask to be baptized. Because I felt that church was where the gospel would be lived out.

Bonnie Berg read two scriptures for us today, and I share my story in relation to both the scriptures she had read.

No, I was not a real-time witness to the real-time crucifixion of Jesus by the Roman authorities. But I had gone through some things in life when I was at that desperate praying juncture that had truly challenged the image of God

within my own self. It was as though that image of God within me had been crucified, and without it, there was only me, in the dark room of my own regrets and emptiness, scared and disconnected from God.

In this way, my experience was like that of the disciples, huddled in the room in fear, after Jesus' crucifixion ... not sure what had happened to their Messiah. Scared, probably ashamed for abandoning him, likely some measure of PTSD at play. The last thing they expected was to have Jesus enter through those closed doors, the Jesus they had seen murdered.

Stay-At-Home orders can also set this stage ... huddled in our homes, fearful of infections now especially with the more infectious variants of concern, we sit kind of waiting, wondering: what next?

But Jesus came, Jesus comes, entering into that dark confined space as Jesus entered into my dark night of the soul ... breathing the Holy Spirit onto me, onto you, onto each one of us ... instructing us in forgiveness, granting us this incredible, grace-blanket of forgiveness, and sending us out.

"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,

"Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

When we receive the light of God, when we truly receive the Holy Spirit, we enter into a whole other kind of struggle ... we become creatures of divine light ... "God is light and in God there is no darkness at all.

If we say that we have fellowship with God while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true;

but if we walk in the light as God's own self is light, we have fellowship with one another."

What powerful truth ... for even through stay at home orders, even through lockdowns, even through the various violences COVID has visited upon us – we have had this incredible fellowship with us. Jesus has crossed through closed doors, through masks, through safe distancing spaces, drawn close enough to each one of us to breathe on us:
 -Spirit breath,
 -witness breath,
 -the breath of resurrection life.

And we are instructed: "RECEIVE the Holy Spirit" ... Reception requires open hands and open hearts, for :

-how can I receive anything into these hands when my fists are clenched?
 -How can I receive anything into this heart, when unforgiveness, when grudge holding, when fear and scarcity hold me captive?
 -How can I walk in the light when I cling to darkness?

It is entirely impossible – God can shower us with Spirit – receiving is on us. Receiving is an instruction – we can choose to obey or not obey. God can shine light on us, but we must open our eyes if we are to receive anything but darkness ...

Throughout the season of Easter, we read from the Book of Acts. Many of us have not spent much time studying this book. Yet we claim to be Christians, and we claim we want to see growth in the body of Christ: the church. If we really want to see this infectious disease of Christ witness occur, reading the book of Acts is some essential schooling. Not one of us has seen more than a few baptisms occur at a time; in the book of Acts it was happening in the thousands.

Why?

Because of the power of witness in drawing people towards the light of God ...

When I was in seminary and learning language tools, I remember studying the word Greek word, “martureo”. It means¹ to be a witness, to bear witness, i.e. to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something, or that he knows it because taught by divine revelation or inspiration

- a. to give (not to keep back) testimony
- b. to utter honourable testimony, give a good report

The online study tool I used to cite this definition says this root word for witness, martureo occurs 81 times in the New Testament ... 31 times in the Gospel of John, and 11 times in the book of Acts. So, more than half of the times this word is used occurs between these two books.

As a new Christian – meaning one who had received a divine revelation of Jesus, I went to join a church community and be baptized because I believed in the church as a collective witness of the good news of Jesus. In the book of ACTS, it is the acts of witness of those who came to believe in Jesus that moved so many to curiosity, to openness, so that they too could receive the Holy Spirit.

As modern-day Christians, we have travelled a long long distance from those early Jesus-followers, from whom sprung this infectious spreading of the Gospel. What of this description can we truly claim today:

- the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul,
- no one claimed private ownership of any possessions,
- everything they owned was held in common.
- They gave their testimony or witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,
- there was not a needy person among them
- for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold.
- it was distributed to each as any had need.

What do we hold in common, to be shared with any as have need?

Are we of one heart and soul as believers?

Do we bear witness to the powerful love of God in Jesus?

Are there needy around us and among us?

Or are we still huddled in a closed off space, fists closed, hearts closed, waiting to receive that which God has given to us?

People join church communities, and leave for a variety of reasons.

I joined a church because I wanted to share my incredible witness, to walk as a child of the light. I wanted, and want ever-more, to walk with Jesus.

Let us be open to God’s light.

Let us receive the peace Jesus begins.

Let us receive Holy Spirit.

Let us share our witness and walk with Jesus. Amen.

¹ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/martureo.html>

Hymn of the Day: #364 Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulcq4PNckAo>

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Prayers of Intercession

Confident that God provides for us abundantly, we bring our prayers before God ...

Holy God, our Father, you give us your son, Jesus,
and you equip us and empower us with the Holy Spirit.

You lead us with instructions, by example, and with inner promptings.

Strengthen us to be obedient to you, and to be hopeful about our leaders.

Where leaders fall or do wrong, help them to be raised up.

God of Abundance ... hear our prayers.

Generous & Abundant God, you bless us with many gifts.

Here in Cambridge, in Waterloo Region:

you have given us as a congregation the gift of many opportunities:

opportunities for partnerships, opportunities for our facilities.

May we invest our gifts in the work of your Kingdom,

as we follow you through these three days.

Help us to be responsible servants, investing wisely the gifts you give us.

Help us to return to you, in Word, sacrament and actions of love:

In this season of Easter, draw us closer to you in the Word.

God of Abundance ... hear our prayers.

Great and Holy Spirit, you walk alongside us always,

Nudging us towards deepening relationship with God.

Be with the families and loved ones of those who have died unexpectedly.

As we encounter news of pandemic deaths, violence and disasters in our world,

keep us open to your nudging,

help us to hear you,

Make us your Holy vessel and a channel for your love.

God of Abundance ... hear our prayers.

God who sees all and knows all, we Pray:

For people across Canada who are affected by: suicide and addictions,

of whom Indigenous people are affected in disproportionate numbers.

We pray for our children's and youth ministry.

We pray for those who are questioning meaning and purpose.

We ask God to be with those who suffer,

especially those we name aloud

or in the silence of our hearts

(leave time for the prayers to come forward).

For these we have named, and the ones we hold in our hearts, we pray.

God of Abundance ... hear our prayers.

God of Love, you call us to serve our neighbors.

Nourish us with word and sacrament and bless those who are unable to worship today.

Receive our prayers into your tender-loving care, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Share the peace of Christ:

The Peace of Christ be with you always, in your home and in mine, and throughout God's creation.

Meal:

Click here for the communion liturgy from worship on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HsiaRdyFr50>

I invite you to prepare your table with bread and wine, or crackers and juice, whatever is available to you, so that you may participate in the meal.

Prayer after Communion

We give you thanks almighty God,
that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life.
In your mercy and love,
strengthen us in faith towards you and in love towards each other,
in Jesus name we pray.
Amen.

Sending Hymn #396 Spirit of Gentleness

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ww7lx8t7Ls0>

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Blessing:

May God bless you and keep you.
May the face of God shine upon you with grace and mercy.
May God look upon you with favor
and give you ☩ peace.

Amen.

Dismissal:

L: Go in Peace. Christ is with you. **C: *Christ is Risen, Alleluia.*** *