

April 12 2020 – Easter Sunday

A Blessed Easter morning to you, and welcome to our sixth online worship service, during the time of church closure due to COVID. This has not been an easy worship service to prepare, as the times are so unusual and for so many of us, to understand and find meaning in the celebration of Easter morning, when we cannot gather is profoundly jarring to our sensibilities. I opted not to record the sermon, because I could not preach today without becoming a weeping mess – and it is from this spiritual and psychological space that this worship service was prepared.

We celebrate today not only the risen Christ, but all that goes with arriving at the tomb and finding it empty. Never before have I focused so on the disciples experiences of fear and being perplexed when they encounter the empty tomb. I believe this Easter Sunday, honouring this aspect of Easter morning is important as it honours our own current experiences of fear and being perplexed. As such, we are completely off the lectionary, using the Mark reading on the encounter with the empty tomb, Isaiah and Revelations. But I also encourage you to read the parallels in the other gospels: Matthew 28, John 20 and Luke 24. When we read all three, we realize that our experience is indeed an Easter morning experience too ☺

**Usually also we celebrate Easter morning with very resounding and rousing, happy hymns. I am finding it challenging to celebrate with those hymns in those forms today, so listen for what the words of the hymns are saying to you if you are able to access this online. And to be comfortable to bring your whole confused self to this worship service ... the risen Jesus meets us here.
- with love, in Christ, Pastor Janaki.**

**Please take a few moments of silence,
prepare your heart,
centre yourself for worship .**

Prelude: Dona Nobis Pacem (Grant Us Peace)

Click here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSdGW_HBrLE

**Alleluia! Christ is risen.
*Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!***

Gathering Hymn 'Jesus Christ Is Risen Today'

Click here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1brSOs0IMc>

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you

Prayer of the Day:

Life-giving Creator, you meet us at the empty tomb. Jesus is not there - He is risen and alive. Where we feel darkness and death encroaching, where the emptiness of the tomb disturbs us, help us to hold on to hope, through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Way-Maker. Amen

The First Reading: Isaiah 65:17-21

"Pay close attention now:

I'm creating new heavens and a new earth.

All the earlier troubles, chaos, and pain are things of the past, to be forgotten.

Look ahead with joy.

Anticipate what I'm creating:

I'll create Jerusalem as sheer joy,

create my people as pure delight.

I'll take joy in Jerusalem, take delight in my people:

No more sounds of weeping in the city, no cries of anguish;

No more babies dying in the cradle,

or old people who don't enjoy a full lifetime;

One-hundredth birthdays will be considered normal

—anything less will seem like a cheat.

They'll build houses and move in.

They'll plant fields and eat what they grow. [The Message Translation]

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

Psalm 27 - The Lord is my Light and Salvation

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZN-GG8RgviQ>

The Second Reading: Revelations 21

I saw Heaven and earth new-created. Gone the first Heaven, gone the first earth, gone the sea.

I saw Holy Jerusalem, new-created, descending resplendent out of Heaven, as ready for God as a bride for her husband.

I heard a voice thunder from the Throne: "Look! Look! God has moved into the neighborhood, making his home with men and women! They're his people, he's their God. He'll wipe every tear from their eyes. Death is gone for good—tears gone, crying gone, pain gone—all the first order of things gone." The Enthroned continued, "Look! I'm making everything new. Write it all down—each word dependable and accurate."

Then he said, "It's happened. I'm A to Z. I'm the Beginning, I'm the Conclusion. From Water-of-Life Well I give freely to the thirsty. Conquerors inherit all this. I'll be God to them, they'll be sons and daughters to me. But for the rest—the feckless and faithless, degenerates and murderers, sex peddlers and sorcerers, idolaters and all liars—for them it's Lake Fire and Brimstone. Second death!"

[The Message Translation]

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

Children's Message – Enjoy the Holy Week Story, told by Sarah Gomes ...

Click here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BSPxjPX40Wo&feature=youtu.be>

Gospel Acclamation with visuals of our church windows:

"How Beautiful Are the Feet of Him from Handel's Messiah featuring Julianne Bintakies, soprano, Barbara Burden, alto, and Bradley Moggach, piano. The piece was recorded in 2009 for the 175th anniversary of our congregation. It was part of a CD created for the occasion entitled, Remember, Rejoice, Renew."

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rm9bAUffHK4&feature=youtu.be>

The Holy Gospel according to Mark 16:1-8.

C: Glory to you O Lord.

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome purchased [sweet-smelling] spices, so that they might go and anoint Him. Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll back the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?"

Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, though it was extremely large.

Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right, wearing a [long, stately] white robe; and they were **amazed and bewildered**. And he said to them, "Do not be **amazed**; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen; He is not here. See, [here is] the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see Him there, just as He told you.'"

They went out and **fled** from the tomb, for they were **seized with trembling and astonishment**; and they said nothing [about it] to anyone, because they were **afraid**. [The Amplified Translation]

The Gospel of our Lord. ***C: Praise to you, O Christ.****

Sermon (imagine Pastor Janaki's voice here):

The varying accounts of the women going to Jesus' tomb on Easter morning tell a very different story than the high flying, organ jiving, joyous celebration which we usually have as we celebrate Easter Sunday ... perhaps in this, the pandemic context we find ourselves in today, has done us the favour of giving us a reality that more closely resembles what the three women may have been feeling and thinking when they went to that tomb, to dress Jesus' body with aromatic spices, three days after his crucifixion.

We come to Easter Sunday in joyous anticipation of the risen Christ. At St Peter's, Easter Sunday usually includes the smell of freshly made pancakes and some kind of tasty meaty breakfast product. We enjoy breakfast in between two celebration services, and all is pastel colours and Easter egg joy. All is Christ is Risen, Alleluia Christ is Risen.

But in the Gospel, the women came expecting to find a dead body on the cusp of going smelly, or already there (hence the aromatic spices with which they travelled). They come having endured the horrendous witness of Jesus being nailed to the cross, and suffering a terrible death just a couple days ago. They have had a sabbath day in between, and maybe they realized, in the midst of their trauma they had not even dressed Jesus' very dead body. And so they come, on Easter morning ... preparing for the difficult yet sacred task of caring for the dead body of the one they thought was their Messiah.

The practical reality of their expectation of a tomb is expressed in their question ... "Who will roll back the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" How will they even get in to attend to his body.

We make nice of it, but their experience of coming and finding the tomb empty may have felt for them more like an invasion of the body snatchers than a good thing ... furthermore, the presence of some random dude (in some accounts angels, but in Mark, some random dude) dressed in a long and stately robe, does not exactly inspire confidence and good cheer. The translation used here repeatedly says they were **amazed** and bewildered ... the Greek word is *ekthambos*, meaning to be astonished utterly -- affright, greatly (sore) amaze. This is not an "oh wow, this is wonderful" kind of amazement, but more a "what the heck is going on here" kind of amazement.

Today, this Easter Sunday, I can relate really well to their *ekthambos*. How did we arrive here? How is this Easter Sunday? My amazement today is not at how wonderful it is to be celebrating Easter morning, my amazement is much more of the "what the heck is going on here" variety.

The encounter in the tomb, now empty of Jesus' body does not result in a Pollyanna-esque skipping off joyously into the noon day light ... when the women get back out of the tomb, they **fled** ... the Greek root word, *pheugo* does not mean an excited running off to tell others the good news ... it means they took flight as in "to escape" and

specifically, the form used in Mark 16:8 describes their “fleeing of the person inspiring fear or threatening danger” ...

Makes me think of the hurried way in which I pop into and out of the grocery store or drug store these days ... makes me think of my instinctual desire to run if someone sneezes or coughs when I am out and about, or even walking the dog ... I want to flee from that person who is inspiring in me fear or the threat of some real danger.

If you have felt that gut-grabbing fear in any of these past days, if you have felt that immobilizing grief of life as you know it or life as you anticipated it being ... that life slipping so completely away – this grief and this fear are echoed in the movements of these women towards the tomb, with spices to dress a dead body, and then fleeing in fear. Make no mistake about it – this too is Easter morning my beloved friends.

They flee in **astonishment** (from the Greek root *ekstasis* meaning “a displacement [of the mind], bewilderment, ecstasy, distraction or disturbance of mind caused by shock, bewilderment, amazement; a trance” – so more like a shell shock effect). They flee because they are **afraid** (from the Greek root *phobos* meaning “to put to flight, to terrify, frighten”).

Does any of this sound or feel familiar to you?

If it does, then you came to the right place because, yes my beloved friends this is the Word of God, about Easter morning.

The best thing for me right now about the Word of God is the hope that is also foretold, the newness of life that is also foretold ... it was foretold once and has been fulfilled: we hear that foretelling in the Isaiah reading – and Jesus fulfilled it.

It is foretold again after his death, resurrection and ascension in Revelations ... and God is faithful to deliver to God’s prophecies:

“Look! Look! God has moved into the neighborhood, making his home with men and women! They’re his people, he’s their God. He’ll wipe every tear from their eyes. Death is gone for good—tears gone, crying gone, pain gone—all the first order of things gone.” The Enthroned continued, “Look! I’m making everything new. Write it all down—each word dependable and accurate.”

This commitment is given onto us in the Revelations reading ... God is with us, right here in our neighbourhoods.

Not “God will move into the neighbourhood” ...

Not “God shall be their God” ...

Not “Death shall be abolished for good” ...

None of this is future tense ... it is all the present tense – and as the scripture itself says, each word dependable and accurate ...

God IS with us.
God IS our God.
Death IS gone for good.

AND it is not all pastel coloured Easter eggs, and cute little bunnies and an abundance of chocolate.

AND it is not about the smell of pancakes, the smell of bacon, the smell of all things bright and beautiful.

It is also about the smell of death, the stink of fear, the shell shock of life as we know it changing before our very eyes, the displacement of mind that comes from not knowing what the heck is going on ... It is also about the desire to flee this current reality because this IS hard.

AND the tomb is empty.

And God IS with us.
And God IS our God.
And Death IS gone for good.

This IS the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn of the Day – We Know That Christ Is Raised

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYS491Bpuac>

Thanksgiving for our Presence on this Land.

We thank you God, for granting our existence on this safe, bountiful, land, and we recognize that we thrive here and enjoy life on the traditional territories of the Anishnabe, Neutral and Haudenosaunee people. **Amen.**

A RE-cited Apostle's Creed (By Bishop Sid Haugen)

I believe that God created this good world of sun and stars, of wild places and cultivated fields, of work and play, of art and sport. I believe that God placed me on this earth for a reason; along with every other human being I meet each day. I believe that every day is a gift. For all of this I am called to thank God and love the life God made.

I believe that Jesus Christ is the divine one: who walked this earth, and who, in his teaching, life and death shows me the heart of a loving God. I believe that the resurrection of Jesus brings a hope and a life to the world and to my life that cannot be quenched by all the forces of this world, by my own human brokenness, or by death itself. For all this, I am called to love Jesus and to follow him by serving others.

I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe that I could never find God by my own intelligence or effort, but the Spirit of God, moving like the wind, has graciously called me through the wonder of the gospel: through the community of Jesus, through the Word and sacraments – just as the Spirit calls the whole church in its many families with its many names. I believe this same Spirit speaks and works through people who may not know a church and who may not call themselves religious in any way. For all of this, I am called to live generously, as one who has faith that God is always at work in me, in the church, and in the world itself.

While you listen to the offertory song, continue your prayers with the words of the song, and consider how you may be a blessing in the coming week.

Offertory – **Dona Nobis**

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bURkIF4aULM>

Offering Prayer

God of all abundance, receive our brokenness and the offering of our lives. Take us, who return to you in thanksgiving: form us and shape us into a love like Jesus, so that we may be love for this broken world. **Amen.**

(please remember to send an offering to the church if you are able)

Prayers of Intercession (Prepared by Pastor Joanna Miller)

Loving God, in these days, when it feels like we're living out the realities of Holy Week like never before, keep reminding us that the story doesn't end with death, or waiting. Help us to believe that something new and wonderful will emerge from this; fill us up with hopeful expectation for what will come. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We are seeing reports, God, of drastic drops in the levels of emissions and pictures of the ways that life is re-emerging. Help us to be inspired by these stories and pictures, that we might become even more committed to the work of caring for this planet we inhabit and for all the creatures who share it with us. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for the decision makers, O God. For our political leaders, that they lead according to the best information to keep as many of our neighbours as safe as possible. For the scientists, who are working so hard to understand what is happening and for the ones who work hard for a vaccine. For the business leaders who are responsible for the care of their workers. For the health care providers, who run towards the fire and accept the risk in the name of serving others. For the parents, who struggle to find a balance between work and play, screens and fresh air. Give them all your wisdom and compassion. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for the vulnerable in our midst. For those whose suffering began long before we heard of COVID-19. For those whose mental health is suffering. For those who are in the midst of treatments and diagnoses and for all who are medically fragile. Be with each one, send them your healing, be present with them. We pray especially for those we name we name either silently or aloud.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We give you thanks for all the saints that have gone before us, whose faith reminds us to hold on in the midst of fear and unknown. Bless all those in your presence and all who will die this day. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

All these things, Lord, we entrust to your care, knowing that you hear all of our prayers. And we pray in the way that Jesus taught us to pray:

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, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. **AMEN.**

Sending Hymn: It is Well with My Soul

Click here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zY5o9mP22V0&list=RD84YASWe3_2Q&index=9

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, Go in Hope. **C: Thanks be to God. ***

Notices about church in time of COVID-19:

- **The Public Health & Provincially mandated closure of churches continues through May 4th (at the earliest). We will continue to keep you updated on Facebook, via website and by telephone, as we are able. Although the church building is closed, voicemail is checked regularly at 519-653-4721 the church number or 519-588-7701 Pastor. Please call if you need a pastoral telephone visit, or if we can help in any way. It is impossible for Pastor to call everyone in turn, so she is relying on you to reach out if you need a call.**
- **You will find this worship service most helpful if you read the sections out loud at home 😊 And sing along 😊 Brad also recommends looking up other lyric videos that pop up - Glory to God at home 😊**
- **As far as possible, the regular work of the church continues. Lay leaders are meeting using online meeting tools. In the coming week, church council and VIM will meet using Zoom, to finalize a Terms of Reference for continuing our missional redevelopment explorations. Our goal is to share information and be "ready to roll" when COVID lockdown is over.**
- **Bonnie Scott continues to prepare and share information as widely as possible for those who do not have internet access. Brad continues to come in and practice. Pastor continues to visit, via telephone, to accompany however possible, and to prepare worship materials. Alex continues to bear the responsibility of treasurer and reminds us that buying and selling maple syrup is a good way to occupy our time 😊**
- **Thank you for accessing this Easter Sunday service. When we re-open, we will have our Easter service in community.**
- **Please stay in touch with each other. Call each other. Visit on the telephone, and where safe, through closed glass doors, and across fences. Let us know how we can help if you are shut in but need groceries or something delivered. Keep safe, and keep on praying. Think of this time as our time in the tomb, with our Saviour, from which we will be delivered soon 😊 Call Pastor if you need to talk, because she cannot possibly call everyone 😊**
- **May God bless you and keep you safe ...**