

May 10 2020 – Fifth Sunday of Easter

A Blessed Sunday morning to you, and welcome to our tenth online worship service, during the time of church closure due to COVID. Today's service again includes organ music from Brad, and our meditation focuses on the lectionary reading from 1 Peter 2.

During this past week, your church council met by video conferencing, and one of the things we discussed was protocols for re-opening church. We want to reassure you that every possible measure will be taken to make our return to gathered worship as gentle and safe as possible for all of us. It will be normal for you to have concerns for your safety and health as restrictions get lifted. We know that post-lockdown does not really mean post-COVID, since COVID will still be around and we will still need to be very careful and take many safety precautions.

If you want to talk with me about how the thought of returning to "things being open" might be affecting you, please get in touch – via church phone 519-653-4721, text or cell call 519-588-7701 or by email pastor@st-peters-cambridge.org ... talking about our anxieties is one of the best ways for us to overcome them, if not lay them to rest.

Remember also to reach out by telephone, email or Facebook if you need a friendly phone call or a screen door visit. And please remain connected with each other by telephone – make it your goal this week to call at least one person every day for a telephone visit. You will be blessed, and will be a blessing in the process ☺

- with love, in Christ, Pastor Janaki.

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

Prelude: Brad on our organ from church – these notes are from Brad on this piece:

"Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier". is a chorale prelude by Bach on a very familiar hymn tune we sing, typically at baptisms. However, I have often played it as a reflective prelude on any given Sunday to quietly make an association to our baptism (Dearest Jesus, We Are Here, elw443). The composition reveals Bach pushing the limits of acceptable dissonance in his day and even to our modern ears it is challenging. The tune is heard in the top voice but also in a middle voice trailing along at a different pitch. The math (science) at work here is very much akin to something being in two different places at the same time. As a spiritual gathering of people we are well placed to ponder such possibilities.

Click here: <https://youtu.be/NVyHRihVtyA>

Gathering Hymn: God Will Make a Way (Don Moen)

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zo3fJYtS-o>

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:

All-powerful and empowering God, you have made us, individually and collectively, as part of your good creation. Help us to understand ourselves as your children, fed by your hand. Help us to be living stones, how ever and where ever we currently are, in the building up of your Kingdom, through Jesus our Redeemer and Way-Maker. Amen

The Lesson: Acts 7:55-60

But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died. [NRSV]

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

Psalm 31 (represented in hymnody) **You Are My Strength**

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTIPRjK7Wpo>

The Holy Gospel according to John 14:1-14.**C: Glory to you O Lord.**

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I

am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it. [NRSV]

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

Acclamation of the Word 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 Reading: 2 Peter 2:1-12

So clean house! Make a clean sweep of malice and pretense, envy and hurtful talk. You've had a taste of God. Now, like infants at the breast, drink deep of God's pure kindness. Then you'll grow up mature and whole in God.

Welcome to the living Stone, the source of life. The workmen took one look and threw it out; God set it in the place of honor. Present yourselves as building stones for the construction of a sanctuary vibrant with life, in which you'll serve as holy priests offering Christ-approved lives up to God. The Scriptures provide precedent:

Look! I'm setting a stone in Zion,
a cornerstone in the place of honor.
Whoever trusts in this stone as a foundation
will never have cause to regret it.

To you who trust him, he's a Stone to be proud of, but to those who refuse to trust him,
The stone the workmen threw out is now the chief foundation stone.

For the untrusting it's . . . a stone to trip over, a boulder blocking the way.

They trip and fall because they refuse to obey, just as predicted.

But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.

Friends, this world is not your home, so don't make yourselves cozy in it. Don't indulge your ego at the expense of your soul. Live an exemplary life among the natives so that your actions will refute their prejudices. Then they'll be won over to God's side and be there to join in the celebration when he arrives. [The Message Translation]

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

Sermon (imagine Pastor Janaki's voice here):

In a worship building that is no longer in use for that purpose, in 2012, when I was in seminary, I remember standing shoulder to shoulder with a number of youth, swaying gently and singing these words:

“Lord prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true ...
 With thanksgiving, I’ll be a living sanctuary for you ... ”

There was something in those words that moved me to a flow of tears and I think it was the request, indeed the commitment, for my personhood to be a place where God would take up residence. It was early in my journey of preparation for ministry, and so often (then, as now) I feel inadequately equipped ... but on a good day I remember that it is not who or what I am, but what God does in, with and through me that equips me to be that sanctuary. And for that I am thankful – because, left to my own devices this would not happen; we are, each and every one of us, equipped by Divine providence to be a sanctuary.

The worship building in which I sang those words and shed those tears is no longer a worship building – it was the main chapel at Camp Edgewood. But the incapacity for Camp Edgewood to continue being a viable outdoor ministry does not, as we know, mean that outdoor ministry ceased. Camp became a different experience entirely ... and for a number of years, our kids from St Peter’s have gone to camp even though Edgewood closed.

For these many weeks, though our church building doors have been closed for gatherings, you who have been faithfully reading the services and following the worship music and prayers have been placing yourself in that servant frame of mind to become a sanctuary for God. If you are reading this and you are a Christian, Jesus is the cornerstone, the head cornerstone of the sanctuary you seek to become. And one of the most incredible things to me about our faith is this: no matter who we are or how we are, if we present ourselves as building stones for the construction of a sanctuary vibrant with life, we will not be rejected by God, but made new in Christ to become part of this church whose doors never close, and whose blessings know no limit.

When we trust in Jesus as the way-maker, the head cornerstone, we will never have to regret it. And you, “you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God’s instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.”

This first letter from Peter does not require a whole lot of unpacking, and it speaks to us individually as well as collectively. The opening of the letter addresses the very issue of separation and distance – and Jesus who brings us together:

“I, Peter, am an apostle on assignment by Jesus, the Messiah, writing to exiles scattered to the four winds. Not one is missing, not one forgotten. God the Father has his eye on each of you, and has determined by the work of the Spirit to keep you obedient through the sacrifice of Jesus. May everything good from God be yours!” (1 Peter 1:1-2).

During this time of separation from each other, what has God said to you? How has God spoken to you through the isolation, through the news of death, through the fear and through the anxiety? Do you feel prepared to trust that it will be safe to re-enter into each other’s company? Do you feel it is necessary? Do you want to go there (yet)?

I ask this because as we begin to hear news of things re-opening, we will all have anxieties and reservations, perhaps mingled with the excitement of things returning to some kind of normal. But it will not be the same normal we had before COVID-19. I am confident that, when we get past the lockdown phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, many, many things will have changed.

One of the things I have tried to remain very open to, is the possibilities and indeed the opportunities for changes in how we live our lives as the church of Jesus Christ. Not as the congregation of St. Peter’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cambridge, but as the body of Jesus, who individually and collectively, usher in the Kingdom of God – each one of us opening up ourselves to be a building stone for the construction of a sanctuary that houses God – whether we feel ready to return to worship gatherings or not. I want to encourage you to allow yourselves to be open to how God may call upon you to be a sanctuary, and know it may not look the way being faithful has looked in the past. Do not be afraid of the old ways that may not be part of the new normal, because we are being remade daily by God: Father, Son and Spirit, who work in, with and through us to allow the no longer needed, the unnecessary, the false idols, the facades – allow them all to fall away and die, so that our resurrection may be possible as the living sanctuary of God.

Amen.

Hymn of the Day – Brad on the organ for “You Satisfy the Hungry Heart”

Click here: <https://youtu.be/rqQULLyG0dE>

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.**

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 – Christ, Unser Herr, zum Jordan Kam featuring Bradley Moggach, Organ

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=130056ZPESE&feature=youtu.be>

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 (Adapted from prayers 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 all who are affected by violence during these days, whether it is the plague of domestic violence, or the terrible realities of physical and gun violence. We especially uphold in our prayers, the family and loved ones of those who died in Nova Scotia. We remember those who are hurting, loved ones to both the shot and the shooter, and we ask you to walk with them Jesus. To bring your peace and comfort to them, in the midst of this random, mysterious grief.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for those in Fort McMurray who have had to be evacuated due to flooding. We ask your strength and your presence with them as they journey through difficult times again, so soon after the fires they endured a few years ago.

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:

Baba Yetu – Swahili Lord's Prayer - Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=or4IKVG2zAA>

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: Thank you Lord (Don Moen)

Click here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DN3_tSDhDpY

Blessing:

May God bless us and keep us.

May the face of God shine upon us with grace and mercy.

May God look upon us with favor

and give us ☩ peace.

Amen.

Dismissal:

Go in Peace, Go in Hope. **Thanks be to God. ***

Notices about church in time of COVID-19:

- The Public Health & Provincially mandated closure of churches continues through May 19th (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 past week, church council met. This coming week, the Risk Management Ministry Team will meet with Pastor and Bonnie, via email and online tools to work on our safety protocols for when we return to worshipping together at church. 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 and record. 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 Fifth Sunday of Easter 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 ...