

**ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH**  
**May 3, 2020 - 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter**

Welcome to Worship, Easter Sunday  
Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time at 11:30 a.m. Sunday, May 3  
Email [absolute\\_solutions@live.com](mailto:absolute_solutions@live.com) to get the Zoom link.

**Prelude**

**Welcome – Anne Pile**

Welcome! Welcome to St Andrew's worship, not physically, but welcome to this virtual space that connects us. Just a couple of words before we begin. Make yourself comfortable. Take a breath... Be present, be open to what God might have to say to you today.

If you would like to join us for Virtual Fellowship Time at 11:30, please contact Leslie Cassidy. Her contact information above, is in the NEWS that was emailed on Thursday, and on the Facebook page.

Now let us prepare for worship together. Let us become connected by God's love as we enter worship.

**Acknowledging Traditional Territory**

We take a moment to think about, give thanks for the privilege of worshiping land cared for long before settlers arrived here: the Atikemekshing Anishnawbek and the Wahnapiitae First Nation. We worship, you worship on traditional territory of a First Nation. Let us be thankful to the Creator for this wonderful land, and pray one day for just sharing and true reconciliation.

**Lighting the Christ Candle**

We welcome the Holy into this space, yours and mine. We are connected by God's Spirit, we need to welcome God. So, as we light the Christ Candle, let us welcome the Holy One; God, fill us with your Spirit now.

**Call to Worship**

In these moments of isolation and wondering what tomorrow might bring,  
let us lift our voices to God.

**We will call on the One who promises to hear us,  
and better – to listen to our hearts and souls.**

In days of uncertainty, when the future seems unclear,  
in life, in death, in every moment, God deals graciously with us.

**We will rejoice in the One who is with us  
walking with us, opening our eyes, touching our heart.**

As God's people, we know that the Bread of life is for us,  
even as we hunger for hope, life, joy, healing for our brokenness.

**Just as we do with the cup of salvation,  
we will lift our hearts in thanksgiving to our God.**

**Opening Prayer**

God in Community, Holy in One, be with us in this worship,

journey with us when worship ends.  
Help us to slow down just enough, even as we try to escape  
our isolation, may goodness and mercy can catch up with us  
and carry all of Creation in Love. We pray this along with the prayer  
that Jesus taught...

### **The Prayer Jesus Taught**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kin-dom 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 kin-dom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

### **Hymn: MV 161 I Have Called You by Your Name**

I have called you by your name, you are mine;  
I have gifted you and ask you now to shine.  
I will not abandon you; all my promises are true.  
You are gifted, called, and chosen; you are mine.

I know you will need my touch as you go;  
feel it pulsing in creation's ebb and flow.  
Like the woman reaching out, choosing faith in spite of doubt,  
hold the hem of Jesus' robe, then let it go.

I have given you a name, it is mine;  
I have given you my Spirit as a sign.  
With my wonder in your soul, make my wounded children whole;  
go and tell my precious people they are mine.

### **Bible Reading**

Today's reading takes us forward in time, to Pentecost. Jesus has died in the story of Luke, followers heard that Jesus had risen, but they wait, and wait, until the Pentecost moment – Spirit falling like fire, peasant followers of Jesus speaking in strange languages, an leader of the Jesus movement, Peter, preaches to the onlookers wondering what on earth was happening that day.

#### **Acts 2:43-47** The Message translation

Everyone around was in awe—all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person's need was met.

They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.

### **Response to the Scripture Reading**

May we listen for what this holy Story has to say to us. May we be open to feel wonder, allowing it to change our lives in surprising ways. Amen.

## Message

Blogger Laura Wilcox recounts the harrowing experience of Hurricane Harvey in 2019 in her Houston Texas mid-rise apartment complex.<sup>1</sup> She describes how the bayou waters rose and surrounded the complex, a food shortage, and running water being cut off for a day. Faced with a crisis, though, people rallied together – they shared their rations of food with one another, and strategized together to conserve water.

Years ago, I had the privilege of hearing a centenarian tell me her story of community forming during a time of crisis. She was in a London air raid shelter during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. The German air force was pummeling England from above, but deep in that shelter, community came together. Families and individuals shared what they had with one another. Prior to the war, above ground, they might have been neighbours quarreling over politics. But, wondering if they would ever get out of this place alive – they shared rations, listened to one another's stories.

The writer of both the Gospel Luke and the book of Acts, tells us that Jesus formed a community around him grounded in God's vision for community. What a devastating loss those followers experienced, watching their teacher die. As the Gospel of Luke comes to an end, Jesus appears to them one more time after his death, and says:

...stay in the city *until you have been clothed with power from on high.*<sup>2</sup>

"Wait." They were told. Something big will happen, no details given. This diverse community of Jesus is left to their own devices as they wait... and wait. They might have resorted to bickering, But I'm guessing that the mentoring of Jesus prepared them for this difficult waiting. The focus for the writer shifts from Jesus himself in Luke to following the Jesus community in book of Acts. Acts opens with the followers of Jesus organizing, waiting, uncertain about their future, but holding onto hope.

Facing uncertainty with hope; an experience that we share with the Acts community. We don't know what lays ahead, but we know that God is with us. We learn the stories Jesus, discern their relevance to us; faith is planted deep within us, and it is nurtured, and tested *in times just like we live in now*. Moments that could scare us so much that we might want to hide. But instead, friends, I'm hearing stories from the community that tell me – well, that we are facing uncertainty with bold hope.

In a couple of minutes you are going to hear about what this community of Jesus called St. Andrew's has been up to. Isolated physically, staff and volunteers at St. Andrew's continue to connect with Sudbury's most vulnerable people. Thanks to financial generosity of many of you, and volunteers, love is baked, and shared with the too many people of Sudbury who don't have a stable roof over their heads, but are lucky to get shelter bed.

A week ago I heard a person say that he regularly calls a friend from church who is now confined to their room in a long term care home because of COVID-19 precautions. That regular call probably makes a huge difference to that friend, reminded that they have not been forgotten.

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<sup>1</sup> "Hurricanes Make Community Happen." A blog by Laura Wilcox, November 13, 2017, <https://sacredstoryministries.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> Luke chapter 24, verse 49. New International Version®, NIV® Copyright , ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

I can't help but notice how polarizing and fractious our world has become in recent years. Yet, in this surreal pandemic time there have emerged communities and individuals guided by a love and care for others, as they want to be loved. I believe that God's love flows everywhere. Let me be clear – it isn't just followers of Jesus showing love. But, we, the followers of Jesus, we have this gift of Biblical Stories, like this story from the Acts community.

They endured the crucifixion of their leader, then had to wait. Waiting. Isolated, probably afraid of persecution. Prior to today's Bible story, we would find the Pentecost story, that event that Jesus foretold at the end of Luke's Gospel, the Spirit descended upon the community, energizing them. Community forged within the pressure of crisis, crafted by God's love. The community:

had all things in common; [they sold] their possessions and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need.<sup>3</sup>

Now, I may have rose-coloured glasses on, seeing radical acts of sharing and compassion around me in these trying times. Or, perhaps the stories of Jesus have *formed me*, trained me so that I look for the signs of God's radical sharing community. How about you? Are you looking for signs of hope, or do you find yourself attracted by the sensational and sad stories out there? It is tempting, sensational.

I do believe that we, largely confined to our homes, are like that Acts community; Waiting, praying, hoping for opportunities to act: contributing financially to churches and organizations that are making a difference when we can; volunteering where we have capacity; praying fervently. All reflections of a modern-day Acts community; formed in love by Jesus, activated by the Spirit to respond to this crisis, with deep and abiding hope and faith. Amen.

**Hymn:** VU #348 O Love, How Deep  
O love, how deep, how broad, how high!  
It fills the heart with ecstasy,  
that God, in Jesus Christ, should take  
our mortal form for mortals' sake.

For us he rose from death again,  
for us he went on high to reign,  
for us he sent his Spirit here  
to guide, to strengthen, and to cheer.

To God whose boundless love has won  
salvation for us through the Son,  
to God all praise and glory be  
both now and through eternity.

### **Minute for Mission**

People who are living on the streets in our city are truly suffering in the current lock down. We have learned that many of the clients who come to the Off the Street homeless shelter

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<sup>3</sup> Acts chapter 2, verse 44 & 45. New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

for the night are hungry when they arrive. At St. Andrew's United Church, we are working with the Canadian Mental Health Association to support the 30 guests who use the shelter every night.

Jesus calls his followers to feed hungry people. Twelve bakers from St Andrew's and some their friends are now providing 21 dozen muffins every week to the shelter. The muffins are packaged following the directions of our Health Unit. When guests arrive at the shelter, they are given a muffin and a glass of juice. Then they head to their rooms for a good night's sleep. If you would like to help, by baking, or doing pick-ups, please send the church an email.

Providing food and loving our neighbours is exactly what we are called to do in these days of isolation.

### **Offering Moment**

This is a time that needs our generosity, yours and mine. Generosity of our hearts, generosity of our sharing what we have. Consider what you can share today, even beyond what you do now. Is there someone you know of who needs something? It could be just a listening ear by phone. For those of you that are giving generously of your time and treasure, THANK YOU SO MUCH!

### **Offering Hymn:** VU 179 Hallelujah, Hallelujah

Hallelujah, hallelujah. Give thanks to the risen Christ,  
Hallelujah, hallelujah. Give praise to God's name.

### **Prayers of the Community**

God, while we are in this time of separation, we are not isolated from your goodness and your love. We thank you for the gentle and sacred moments we have witnessed this week: the waking of earth, the warmth of sun, the connections and relationships we continue to build, the care we give, and the care we receive from others.

Especially now, we give thanks for our homes, for they have become, more than ever, places of security and peace for us. Bless the rooms of our homes, the memories we continue to make in these spaces, the places where we sit and play, the places where we make our food, find our rest and care for our bodies. We offer prayers today for those who do not have safe homes, and for those who have no place to call home.

We give thanks for our neighbours, for those who are working in essential services; we pray for their safety; for those who are alone; and for our neighbours who live in long-term care facilities. Watch over our neighbours today.

When our days seem hard, give us the wisdom to learn the lessons that come with waiting. Help us find ways to reconnect to the earth. Though we each have put our lives on hold, yet, may we continue to find ways to serve you, honour you and glorify you. Be our strength and our song. Be our truth and our way. Be our light and our hope, as together we walk the path of Jesus, who is our way, our truth and our life in abundance.

In his sacred name, we make this prayer. Amen.

### **Closing Hymn:** VU #686 God of Grace and Glory

God of grace and God of glory, on your people pour your power;  
now fulfil your church's story; bring its bud to glorious flower.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the facing of this hour.

Lo, the hosts of evil round us scorn your Christ, assail your ways;  
fears and doubts too long have bound us, free our hearts to work and praise.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the living of these days.

Set our feet on lofty places, gird our lives that they may be  
armoured with all Christ-like graces, pledged to set all captives free.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, that we fail not them not thee.

### **Blessing**

We have remembered God's redeeming love.  
We have feasted at the table of God's grace,  
and sung of resurrection hope.  
Now let us go from here to celebrate God's presence in powerful ways  
even as we remain physically disconnected from one another.  
In Christ, we are made into radical community;  
sharing, loving, transforming our relationships and our world.

Will you join with me, saying these closing words?

**Creator God: help us to reach out with our hearts  
when we can't touch with our hands;  
help us to be socially connected,  
when we have to be socially distant;  
help us to love as perfectly as we can,  
knowing that "perfect love casts out all fear." Amen.**

### **Postlude**

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**Call to Worship:** Thanks to Thom Shuman. © 2020 Thom M. Shuman,  
<http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>

**Blessing:** Written by Robin Wardlaw, *Gathering*, Season of Easter, p 51. Used with permission.

**Closing Words:** Offered by our Moderator, The Rev. Richard Bott.

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