

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH
May 22, 2022 – 6th of the Season of Easter

Welcome to Worship

Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time at 7:00 p.m. Sunday, May 22.

Email sketchingalong4@gmail.com to get the Zoom link.

Prelude

Opening Hymn: MV 1 *Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness, vv. 1, 2, 4*

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness, blow thro' the wilderness, calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness, Wind, Wind on the sea.

1. You moved on the waters, you called to the deep,
then you coaxed up the mountains from the valleys of sleep;
and over the eons you called to each thing:
wake from your slumbers and rise on your wings.

2. You swept through the desert, you stung with the sand,
and you goaded your people with a law and a land;
and when they were blinded with their idols and lies,
then you spoke through your prophets to open their eyes.

4. You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes,
from the bondage of sorrow the captives dream dreams,
our women see visions, our men clear their eyes,
with bold new decisions your people arise.

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness, blow thro' the wilderness, calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness, Wind, Wind on the sea.

Inviting Holy Light

We come to this holy space, not because of anything special about the room, or the furniture. It is holy because we encounter the Sacred, the Creator's presence. Let us prepare for worship, by grounding ourselves. Feeling our feet supported by the floor, your body by your chair or couch. Breathe deeply. Notice your surroundings, give thanks As we light this candle to symbolize the presence of God's Spirit. [*lights candle*]

Hymn: VU 374 *Come and Find the Quiet Centre, vs. 2*

2. Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us, knows our being, face to face,
making space within our thinking, lifting shades to show the sun,
raising courage when we're shrinking, finding scope for faith begun.

Nurturing Safe Space

We are all children of God. Each one of us here, or at home, have answered the call of God inviting us to worship together. All are welcome in our diversity – whatever our race, age, gender identity, ability – God's world is beautiful in all its differences.

Acknowledging Traditional Territory

Here we are worshipping on the traditional land of the First Peoples. Across Turtle Island, Treaties were made between colonizers and those who had lived on the land for millennia. Here at St. Andrew's, we give thanks to the Wahnapiatae First Nation and of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek, this land where the Robinson Huron Treaty was made in 1850, and never honoured by Canada. We have a responsibility implied by those ancient and sacred Treaties to share the caretaking of this land with Indigenous neighbours. We give thanks for the current and historic contributions that First Nations and Métis people have made. May we journey and act together towards reconciliation.

Welcome and Announcements

Welcome to St. Andrew's worship, those of you at home joining online and those of you in sanctuary alike – all connected by a Peace that is greater than any peace the world can offer. God's Peace is deep and rich and wide enough to encompass people of all traditions, cultures, religions.

Thank you today Tracey LeGrand for your musical leadership, and Deb McIntosh for leading us in singing. Thanks as always to the many people who have dedicated their time and talent to make this worship possible.

Have you ever gotten so tired and jaded by what you hear and see in the world, that your heart hurts? I do. The friends of Jesus after his crucifixion knew that experience, they needed an infusion of love and the season of Easter tells the stories of Jesus doing just that. Infusing them with Love and Hope. What Easter Love might look like is what today's worship is about.

Due to complications related to the annual audit of our financial statements, the joint Church/Place finance-focused Annual Meeting tentatively scheduled for Sunday May 29 has been postponed to a later date (to be determined). More details will be shared as they become available - in the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact Ralph, Phil or Scott.

Those at home or if you are new here, please note the credits at the end of this worship on screen with contact information – Facebook, our website, email, and our phone number. You can contact us in many ways to say hello and allow us to get to know you. We also have a Virtual Fellowship time tonight at 7:00 with hosts Bev and Diane. Diane's email is also in the credits so you can request your Zoom link to Zoom Social Hour. Please join us. We'd love to see you there.

Call to Worship

God calls us to this place, a haven for healing and hope.

**We come, with the pain of our burdens,
we come to hear God's Word of hope for us.**

Together, we will sing songs of joy;
each of us will hear God whisper our name,
'Beloved of my heart.'

**We join our voices in prayer and praise;
we sing of our longing for new lives.**

Here, our shadowed corners are filled with Light;
here we discover that God dwells in us.

**And not just us, for God would teach all to love;
God's Spirit would lead all peoples in peace.**

Opening Prayer

O Holy One, we rejoice in your resurrection and ascension. Lord Jesus, you departed our world. We are here, yet where are you? We seek you, longing to feel your loving presence. How shall we carry on without you near? So, we pause to listen and to pay attention for the quiet whisper of the Holy Spirit, nudging us closer to you. We pause to realize we are not alone, that you continue to lead us onward, showing us how to create the kingdom of God on earth. As your beloved children, we pray...

The Prayer Jesus Taught

... along with a modern version of the Prayer that Jesus taught:

Heavenly Father, heavenly Mother, Holy and blessed is your true name. We pray for your reign of peace to come, We pray that your good will be done, Let heaven and earth become one. Give us this day the bread we need, Give it to those who have none. Let forgiveness flow like a river between us, From each one to each one. Lead us to holy innocence Beyond the evil of our days

— Come swiftly Mother, Father, come. For yours is the power and the glory and the mercy:
Forever your name is All in One. Amen.

Time up Front

Spirit – Do you know that the word in the Bible for Spirit also means “Helper” or “Walking alongside”? Here is a piece of art showing how, after a horrible day, Jesus is being killed, his friends are in shock and scared. Jesus somehow appears to them, and he blows on them and says Peace. Before he died, stories tell us that he promised them that he would have to go, but he would send to them the Spirit, a Helper. He is giving them reassurance here, you are not alone. He breathes peace on them.

Have you had days when you needed help? I have trouble with stuff at times. How about you?

How about this? You have a new jar of pickles, or anything. You just can't get it off. You try and try. Your face is turning red. No way! We need help. Basic physics saves the day – a lever, this jar opener, always helps me to feel stronger, to get the job done.

Well, the Spirit was that. For Jesus' friends in trouble, for us when we are struggling, we can't see God's Spirit, but it is with us. It helps us, it keeps us company when we feel alone, if we pay attention with our hearts and get quiet and listen when we are scared, we can trust that God's Spirit is our helper to figure out any tough situation. Cool huh?

This is a repeat-after-me prayer:

God, help us to trust that you are with us... always. Help us to know deep down, deep, deep down, that we can get through anything, absolutely anything, if we remember that we cannot do it alone. Spirit, be our helper. Thank you God! Amen

Scripture Reading (Debby Laporte)

John 14: 23-29 – Common English Bible (CEB)

Have you ever thought about Peace? We hear people use the word a lot; peace talks, people wanting peace in a war-torn land, or someone saying desperately, “I just want a little bit of peace and quiet!” Well, peace is at the heart of God's kin-dom vision as Jesus talks about it in Gospels stories. Imagine a deeper peace, a wholeness, that is not something you can buy or earn – it is at the heart of God's dream for us. Here is a story about that kind of peace.

Jesus answered, “Whoever loves me will keep my word. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever doesn't love me doesn't keep my words. The word that you hear isn't mine. It is the word of the Father who sent me.

“I have spoken these things to you while I am with you. The Companion, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I told you.

“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world gives. Don't be troubled or afraid. You have heard me tell you, ‘I'm going away and returning to you.’ If you loved me, you would be happy that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than me. I have told you before it happens so that when it happens you will believe.

Let us pray:

Ever-guiding Spirit, open us to the paths you call us to travel. Open us to the ones with whom you would have us minister. May we welcome one another with hearts of grace, that together we may be hospitable to your purposes. Amen.

Message: “Breathe Deeply”

Message will be posted on the website once it becomes available.

Questions for Reflection:

The Hebrew word for Spirit in the Genesis Creation Story is closely related to the Gospel word for Spirit. One image for it is holy “breath”.

1. What do you think about Spirit as being the very air you breathe, that experiencing God’s peace could be as simple as breathing in and breathing out?
2. How can you practice this regularly over the coming week?

Hymn: MV 154 *Deep in Our Hearts*, vv. 1, 2, 3

1. Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;
deep in our hearts there is a common song;
deep in our hearts there is a common story,
telling Creation that we are one.
2. Deep in our hearts there is a common purpose;
deep in our hearts there is a common goal;
deep in our hearts there is a sacred message,
justice and peace in harmony.
3. Deep in our hearts there is a common longing;
deep in our hearts there is a common theme;
deep in our hearts there is a sacred current,
flowing to freedom like a stream.

Minute for Mission (*Debby Laporte*)

The latest stats released by the United Nations are mind-boggling: More than 12 million people are believed to have fled their homes in Ukraine since the invasion began. Over 5.7 million have left for neighbouring countries, and another 6.5 million people are thought to be displaced inside the war-torn country itself.

Irina, a trained nurse, is one of these millions of people whose family has been torn apart by war. Her husband, a history teacher, joined the territorial defence in the first days of the occupation. In the beginning, Irina and her five- and eight-year-old children moved in with her parents; because the home didn’t have a basement, they rearranged sofas and furniture to create safe shelter. When a bomb exploded in the neighbourhood, Irina had a tough decision to make. Her parents did not want to leave their beloved home, but as a mother she felt she needed to get her children to safety.

After a lot of agonizing soul-searching, Irina parted with her parents and started walking with her children toward the evacuation point. They were forced to take cover as shelling grew near. Eventually, the family was able to catch a train to western Lviv – a 20-hour journey – and then endured another exhausting 5-hour train ride to Batiovo, Transcarpathia.

In Batiovo, they were welcomed into one of 120 refugee centres and shelters. Through bilateral partnership with Hungarian Interchurch Aid held in relationship by ACT Alliance, your generous gifts are helping to provide these centres and shelters with food, water, hygiene products, and household appliances.

There, thousands of people like Irina and her children have found shelter and warm meals, and volunteers are doing what they can to offer support and help keep spirits up. For now, the family isn’t crossing the border; Irina’s husband, sister, and parents are in Ukraine, and Irina doesn’t want to leave them farther behind. She recognizes this might not be an option in the future.

In an unimaginably difficult time, your gifts are not only helping to provide necessities, they are also showing the people of Ukraine you care. Thank you so very much for your compassion. Please continue to hold Irina and the people of Ukraine in your prayers.

Offering Moment

Your donations will help St. Andrew's to partner with people who help the most vulnerable downtown. Giving to the United Church of Canada's Mission and Service allows us collectively to reach out to Ukraine and other places needing love and community. Thank you for sharing your time, talents, and treasures.

Dedication Hymn: MV 86 *Take, O Take Me*

Take, O take me as I am; summon out what I shall be;
set your seal upon my heart and live in me.

Dedication Prayer

Loving God, we know that ministry is not something we do for others nearly so much as it is a life-giving work you call us to do *with* others.

**Use these gifts and our talents,
blended with the gifts and talents of others around the world,
to make a difference in our lives and the lives of others. Amen.**

Prayers of Community

Loving Creator, we dream of a world free of poverty and oppression, and we yearn for a world free of vengeance and violence. And we pray for your peace.

When our hearts ache for the victims of war, of hatred towards others as displayed in Buffalo, and even here in our own neighbourhoods. We lament the prevalence of inequity in our world, racism, poverty. Help us to remember the healing touch of Jesus, calling us to break down the barriers we create, to connect with people, to work not for a peace as we contrive it, but the unifying holy peace only you can bring. Give us the courage and faith to seek healing in our own minds and spirits when we have been broken by violence.

When we feel ourselves fill with anger at those who, those who bully and get away with it, those who spout hateful manifestos, help us to remember Jesus, who loved even as he was dying on a cross. May we find compassion and resolve to act when we feel we are agitated enough by a situation. Grant us wisdom to know those moments and courage to act.

We lift up the world to your love and healing now:

To the people of Ukraine, and Ukrainians around our world whose hearts break as they see their homeland destroyed. Grant them the sense of your comforting presence, but also that your shalom, your peace, will take hold, may we all hold firm to that faith.

We pray for the Russians - first of all. the people who are being jailed right now for speaking up, but the masses of people who are being shielded from facts because of a tyranny in power. We pray for those tyrants in Russia - Putin and the people who look like plastic characters on a tv screen, but who are real people. Your children. We pray for a miracle, that you might turn hearts in coming days, that we might steer towards your vision of peace and justice for all.

We lift up our own personal prayers in this silence. (silence)

Walk with us, God, as we answer your call to be peacemakers. Increase our compassion, our generosity, and our hospitality for the least of your children. Give us the courage, the patience, the serenity, the self-honesty, and the gentleness of spirit needed to work as a global family for peace and reconciliation. Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with us. Amen.

Closing Hymn: VU 684 *Make Me a Channel of Your Peace, vv. 1, 3*

1. Make me a channel of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me bring your love;
where there is injury, your healing power,
and where there's doubt, true faith in you.

O Spirit, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love with all my soul.

3. Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving to all that we receive,
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Blessing

Our God, who is gracious, sends us out to be a blessing.

**With our hearts, we will sing God's praises;
with our hands, we will serve God's people.**

Jesus, who is our Brother, sends us to be with others.

**We will comfort all whose hearts are troubled;
we will go to help all who cry out to us.**

The Holy Spirit, who is our Advocate, sends us into a broken world.

**We will work for justice for all who are oppressed;
we will teach songs of hope to all who despair.**

Blessing Hymn: VU 424 *May the God of Hope, vs. 2*

2. May the God of healing free the earth from fear,
freeing us for peace, both treasured and pursued.
May the God of love keep our commitment clear
to a world restored, to human life renewed.

Praying, let us work for peace,
singing, share our joy with all,
working for a world that's new,
faithful when we hear Christ's call.

Postlude

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Opening Prayer written by Barbara Johns. *Gathering* Lent/Easter 2022, page 44. Used with permission.

The Prayer Jesus Taught by Parker J. Palmer, found in *Peace Prayers*, eds. Carrie Leadingham, Joann E. Moschella, and Hilary M. Vartanian.

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Prayers of the Community written by Jack Knox, pastor of Salem (Oregon) Mennonite Church.

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