

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH
May 29, 2022 – 7th of the Season of Easter

Welcome to Worship

Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time at 7:00 p.m. Sunday, May 29.

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

Prelude

Opening Hymn: VU 402 *We are One*, vv. 1, 2, 3

1. We are one as we come, as we come, joyful to be here,
in the praise on our lips there's a sense that God is near.
We are one as we sing, as we seek, we are found;
and we come needful of God's grace as we meet together in this place.
2. We are one as we share, as we share brokenness and fear,
in the touch of a hand there's a sense that God is here.
We are one as we care, as we heal, we are healed;
and we share warmth in God's embrace as we pray together in this place.
3. We are one as we feast, as we feast, peace becomes the sign;
in the bread and the wine there's a sense of love divine.
We are one as we come, as we feed, we are fed;
and we feel God's refreshing grace as we meet at table in this place.

Inviting Holy Light

We begin by focusing on the fundamentals. We are created in love. We are created to love. We are not alone. In fact we are in the company of community today. We are connected, interwoven, here in worship today. This is sacred space (silence) wherever you are right now. As we light this Christ candle, we welcome the Holy, we breathe in love, and breathe out love. [*lights candle*]

Hymn: VU 374 *Come and Find the Quiet Centre*, vs. 3

3. In the Spirit let us travel, open to each other's pain,
let our loves and fears unravel, celebrate the space we gain:
there's a place for deepest dreaming, there's a time for heart to care,
in the Spirit's lively scheming there is always room to spare!

Nurturing Safe Space

We are all children of God. All are welcome in our diversity – celebrating God's diverse creation – each of us bringing our uniqueness – age, cultural background, gender identity, ability. God's table is an open one, and all are welcome.

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 to 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. We have come to celebrate our ever-changing community comprised of the faithful who come in person, but many who join online as well. We are one community at this moment, invited by the host, Jesus, calling us, teaching us, inviting us to be helpers in building God's Vision.

We are blessed today to have Ralph and Deb McIntosh as our music leaders today. Brennan Maag will be reading the scripture. There is a large, dedicated, team of leaders behind the scenes who contribute their substantial talents towards preparing for this worship – we are deeply grateful to all of you!

Our Easter Journey is near the end. Next week brings a big surprise, both for the disciples who were told by Jesus to go to Jerusalem and wait for him, but also for us. It is going to be WILD next week.

Is that a gift, like a birthday gift over there? I wonder what's in it? (perhaps go shake it) What's that, God? I can't open it, yet? Oh, all right.

This week, as we continue our Journey, is this cute collections of rocks. The word is "Connections". Connections. Well, sometimes I like to be alone and have quiet, but really it is better to be connected, to be part of a family, or a group of good friends, or a choir or sports team, or collection of rocks – those rocks look happy. Today, Jesus tells us about the importance of being connected.

Due to complications related to the annual audit of our financial statements, the joint Church/Place finance-focused Annual Meeting originally scheduled for today 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 is 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

In this space and time, we form community;

Like singing in unison with the strength of common word and action, and like singing in harmony with the depth and richness of different notes and themes.

The Christian church is about community;

and we are all a part of that tradition, with its joys and struggles that come with being in relationship.

We live in community, community with Great Spirit God and community with each other as people of the Spirit.

Let us worship together with God and with each other in our hearts and on our minds, in the building up of the community we are called to be, seeking to be one, just as Jesus prayed we would be.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray, God of all love. Thank you for calling us into relationship with one another and with you. Thank you for the joys and the responsibilities that grow out of who we are. When we get confused, lost, or frustrated, help us to experience your voice, guiding us to places of life. In the name of the Shepherd Christ, we ask...

The Prayer Jesus Taught

... along with the Prayer that Jesus taught, a slightly new version that you are welcome to follow on the screen:

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

So, we are at the end of one journey, the Easter journey, even after Jesus had died, people thought. The story goes that Jesus appeared several times to his friends. He was still with them in a mysterious way. We need people to give us hope when things aren't going well.

Then, Jesus was taken to heaven. But first he had one more conversation with his friends. "When is God's dream of making the world right going to happen?" Jesus said: only God knows that. But God's Spirit, you can't see it, but you can feel it. That will come. You will be my witnesses to the world that I am alive in your hearts.

Then, Jesus was taken up into the sky and disappeared. They stood there, staring, mouths wide open. Looking at empty sky. Suddenly two men appeared—in white robes! They said, "You people! Well, don't just stand there, Jesus will be back, go tell people about what Jesus taught you, and what you saw here!"

If you were there, how would you feel, watching Jesus go up up up? Scared? Amazed? There are many, many pieces of art about the Ascension. This is artwork from Cameroon, Africa (art by Jésus Mafa). This was by Salvador Dali (art by Salvador Dali). This one is interesting because the artist said it came from a dream. Jesus is rising away from us, the ones watching him rise, and he is going into a nucleus of an atom, the very tiny particle of existence.

Finally... It's a COVID joke. Jesus going to heaven, working remotely. I think that Jesus was at home as much in earthly life as he might have been in heaven. Jesus is never far away. He is always with us.

This is a repeat-after-me prayer:
God, thank you for the gift of Jesus.
May we always be ready to be amazed.
May we be amazed by a fluttering butterfly,
and stories of people who do amazing things.
Help us to remember the stories of Jesus,
and that he is always with us,
in our hearts. Thank you, God. Amen

Scripture Reading (Brennan Maag)

John 17: 20-26 – Common English Bible (CEB)

The Easter season draws to a close with these, Jesus' final words to his friends before his arrest. Jesus in past weeks has been comforting, instructing, and preparing "his own" (his words for his friends) for what is to come and for what they are to become in the world. Now, in the text for today, he prays for them, that all disciples of all time may be one in the specific sense in which Jesus and Creator are one.

"I'm not praying only for them but also for those who believe in me because of their word. I pray they will be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. I pray that they also will be in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me. I've given them the glory that you gave me so that they can be one just as we are one. I'm in them and you are in me so that they will be made perfectly one. Then the world will know that you sent me and that you have loved them just as you loved me.

"Father, I want those you gave me to be with me where I am. Then they can see my glory, which you gave me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

“Righteous Father, even the world didn’t know you, but I’ve known you, and these believers know that you sent me. I’ve made your name known to them and will continue to make it known so that your love for me will be in them, and I myself will be in them.”

Let us pray: Loving God, may we not hold silence but speak out. May we find in our throats the words of compassion and peace for those whose voices have been taken away. May we be a community that lives the story of those the world has silenced, for this is your story of justice and resurrection. Amen.

Message: “Following the Signs”

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

Questions for Reflection:

1. Do you hear others talk about signs that “The End is Near”? What do you think about their interpretations of signs they see?
2. Do you see any holy signs of Hope and Love and Peace around you too? Can you take time to give thanks, prayerfully, for them when they appear to you this coming week?

Hymn: VU 567 Will you Come and Follow Me, vv. 1, 2, 4

1. Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don’t know and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?
2. Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?
4. Will you love the “you” you hide if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you’ve found to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

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: VU 539 God of all Good, vs. 1

1. God of all good, our gifts we bring to you,
use them your holy purpose to fulfil;
tokens of love and pledges brought anew
that our whole life is offered to your will.

Dedication Prayer

We believe that Jesus Christ stands for the freedom of all people. We believe that, in the power of the Holy Spirit, as the people of God, we may be part of the bringing in of justice and the journeying towards peace. We believe that God, the Creator of all that is, goes on dreaming of a world in which the chains of oppression are broken and where all who live offer love to each other. The light of our God will lead us on. This we believe, and by this we will live.

Prayers of Community

God of freedom and life, we pray for those who are bound in a fear of others, who live through prejudice, who seek to dominate others they do not understand because of ethnicity and

language, gender and sexuality, age and politics. Hear us as we pray for a community that breaks prejudices and lives in diversity.

Creator God, hear our prayers;

hear us as we break the chains.

God of freedom and life, we pray for those caught up in pain, who are trapped in the suffering of illness or anxiety, who seek freedom through a peace of mind, and a life supported and encouraged by others. Hear us as we pray for a healing that comes in freedom from loneliness and worry.

Creator God, hear our prayers;

hear us as we break the chains.

God of freedom and life, we pray for those trapped in conflict of a violence that is not their own doing, of neighbourhoods and nations who seek conflict before they seek peace.

Creator God, hear our prayers;

hear us as we break the chains.

God of freedom and life, we pray for those who are snared in abuse, in unhealthy and unloving relationships, those trafficked and abused by others, where worth and value seem to belong to others. Hear us as we pray for those enslaved in difficult relationships.

Creator God, hear our prayers;

hear us as we break the chains.

God, we are so grateful for blessings great and small. The support of loves ones encircling us, the miracle of life, this interwoven existence within Creation that we live, among all of your loved creatures. We thank you for faith, and the story of death and resurrection we find in Jesus, a story that is the rhythm all around us – death, but then resurrection.

God, in the quiet of this moment, we pray for those who weigh heavily on our hearts – people in need of your love and care. (*silence*) As we continue to be prayerful, we feel the sensation of being bound... hands bound together by forces that harm us... Then we break those bindings.

Let us say together, Thank you, God.

Thank you, God. Amen.

Closing Hymn: VU 218 *We Praise You, O God*

1. We praise you, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;
in grateful devotion our tribute we bring.
We lay it before you; we kneel and adore you;
we bless your holy name, glad praises we sing.

2. We worship you, God of our mothers and fathers,
through trial and tempest, companion and guide.
When perils o'ertake us, you will not forsake us,
but faithful to your promise, you walk by our side.

3. With voices united our praises we offer
and gladly our songs of thanksgiving we raise.
Our sins now confessing, we pray for your blessing,
to you, our great Redeemer, forever be praise!

Blessing

We leave this place of prayer,

**to join God in listening to the hopes and dreams,
the hidden fears and the doubts of our neighbors.**

We leave this place of grace,
**to share the compassion and joy of Jesus with others,
so they will discover how deeply they are loved.**

We leave to be with the people of our world,
**so the Spirit might bless us with their rich gifts,
so we may discover our oneness in God.**

Blessing Hymn: MV 62 *There is Room for All (sing twice)*

There is room for all in the shadow of God's wing;
there is room for all, sheltered in God's love.
And I rejoice and sing, "My refuge and my rock, in whom I trust."
There is room for all, there is room for all!

Postlude

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Opening Prayer written by Richard Bott. *Gathering* Lent/Easter 2022, p. 45. 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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Blessing written by Thom M. Shuman, June 2, 2019, lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com

Thank you to: Ralph and Deb McIntosh for their musical leadership; Brenna Maag for reading the scripture; Suzanne Nykilchyk for her assistance with liturgy preparation; Jen Bruneau for assisting with graphics for the PowerPoint presentation; Jen Bruneau, Maureen McGuinness, and Suzanne Nykilchyk for the sanctuary décor; and Mallon Appianing and Roger Pile in the audiovisual booth.
