

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH
April 9, 2023
Easter & Sacrament of Communion
Welcome to Worship

Prelude

Reader

Please pray with me: Rabbouni, Teacher, we have spent the past six weeks asking questions. We have turned over every rock. We have shined a light in every dusty corner. We have opened the blinds. We have wrestled with truth. We have sought after you.

So, on this Easter morning, bring wisdom to our seeking.

Move through this room until the walls echo with the sound of alleluias. Roll back the stones that might prevent us from drawing closer to you. Calm our hearts. Say our names. Awaken us to your presence in our midst.

We are here. We are listening. We are seeking after you. Alleluia.

The Easter Story: John 20:1-18 [The Message Translation] (Deb McIntosh)

Early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone was moved away from the entrance. She ran at once to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, gasping for breath. "They took the Master from the tomb. We don't know where they've put him."

Peter and the other disciple left immediately for the tomb. They ran, neck and neck. The other disciple got to the tomb first, outrunning Peter. Stooping to look in, he saw the pieces of linen cloth lying there, but he didn't go in. Simon Peter arrived after him, entered the tomb, observed the linen cloths lying there, and the kerchief used to cover his head not lying with the linen cloths but separate, neatly folded by itself. Then the other disciple, the one who had gotten there first, went into the tomb, took one look at the evidence, and believed. No one yet knew from the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead. The disciples then went back home.

But Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. As she wept, she knelt to look into the tomb and saw two angels sitting there, dressed in white, one at the head, the other at the foot of where Jesus' body had been laid.

They said to her, "Woman, why do you weep?"

"They took my Master," she said, "and I don't know where they put him." After she said this, she turned away and saw Jesus standing there. But she didn't recognize him.

Jesus spoke to her, "Woman, why do you weep? Who are you looking for?"

She, thinking that he was the gardener, said, "Sir, if you took him, tell me where you put him so I can care for him."

Jesus said, "Mary." Turning to face him, she said in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" meaning "Teacher!"

Jesus said, "Don't cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.'"

Mary Magdalene went, telling the news to the disciples: "I saw the Master!" And she told them everything he said to her.

Hymn: VU 179 Hallelujah, Give Thanks (Refrain only)

Hallelujah, hallelujah.

Give thanks to the risen Christ;

hallelujah, hallelujah!

Give praise to God's name.

Opening Hymn: VU 155 *Jesus Christ is Risen Today*

1. Jesus Christ is risen today, hallelujah!
our triumphant holy day, hallelujah!
who did once, upon the cross, hallelujah!
suffer to redeem our loss. Hallelujah!
2. Hymns of praise then let us sing hallelujah!
unto Christ, our heavenly King, hallelujah!
who endured the cross and grave, hallelujah!
sinners to redeem and save. Hallelujah!
3. But the pains which he endured, hallelujah!
our salvation have procured; hallelujah!
now above the sky he's King, hallelujah!
where the angels ever sing. Hallelujah!
4. Sing we to our God above, hallelujah!
praise eternal as God's love; hallelujah!
praise our God, ye heavenly host, hallelujah!
praise the Son and Holy Ghost. Hallelujah!

Inviting Holy Light

Return to light. God comes once again, bringing the gift of a new day!
Return to light. Jesus rises at Easter, confirming the gift of new hope!
Return to light. Spirit sweeps through us, igniting the gift of new life!
(*The new Christ candle is lit.*)

Return to light. The light has returned to us! Hallelujah!
Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Choral Introit: MV 101 *Jesus, You Fill Our Hearts (CHOIR ONLY)*

Jesus, you fill our hearts with your love,
our minds with your peace,
and our lives with joy.

Nurturing Safe Space

As I've repeated through Lent, the words of the Song of Praise, Psalm 139: I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. In our diversity is the mystery and beauty and holiness of God. May we celebrate the uniqueness, the quirks, the differences we each bring: Age, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Neurodivergence (that is, we think differently). That diversity reflects the mystery of a Creator whose wisdom is beyond anything we can imagine.

Acknowledging Traditional Territory

This area, as we know it today, is rich in the history and tradition of caring for the land and for one another of various First Nations and Métis peoples. These lands we now know as Sudbury are the traditional lands of the Wahnapiatae First Nation and the Atikemeksheng Anishnawbek. As we gather today as Treaty People of the Robinson Huron Treaty made in 1850, a Treaty that our government has yet to truly honour, we are in solidarity with indigenous brothers and sisters to honour and respect the land, air, water, all Creation and its plants and animals. On this Easter Sunday, may we celebrate Christ's Resurrection by living into Right Relations, healing the wounds that Christian churches caused in this land, may we honour the spirit of this Creation and all its wonder.

Call to Worship

What are you looking for?
The light before dawn.

What are you looking for?

A reason to hope.

What are you looking for?

Joy after grief and flowers after winter.

What are you looking for?

A place to belong.

What are you looking for?

We are looking for the Messiah.

Good news! Come in. Love is alive!

Surely God is in this place.

Opening Prayer

O God, we come as Easter people to open our eyes to new sights and sounds. We come to find resurrection even when Good Friday hangs so heavily in our world. We come to be changed by songs of birds and angels and find new signs of life all around us. We come to find that we can be different when we open our eyes and ears to joy. We come to touch and smell the good news and find that you, O God, make all things new again. We come to praise you with all of our whole bodies. Halleluia! Christ is Risen!

Christ is Risen indeed! Halleluia!

Hymn: VU 175 *This Is the Day That God Has Made (Refrain only)*

This is the day that God has made!

Rejoice! Rejoice, and be exceeding glad!

This is the day that God has made!

Rejoice! Rejoice! Hallelujah!

Time up Front

Shout and sign "Hallelujah!" the same way you shouted and signed "Hosanna!" last Sunday. What kind of response do you receive? Maybe a hosanna or a hallelujah! Offer it again and a third time, if you want.

What does hallelujah mean? It literally means "praise God" from the Hebrew language. Ask the children and other members of the congregation: What kinds of things might make you say, "Hallelujah!"?

The birth of child or grandchild? "Hallelujah!" Passing a hard test? "Hallelujah!" The arrival of spring? "Hallelujah!" Once more, shout and sign it together several times.

This is a repeat-after-me prayer:

Dear God,...Thank you for things in life...that make us say Hallelujah. Thank you, God, for spring...and sunshine, and starry nights...and your promise...that in life...in death,...in life after death...you are always with us...Christ is Risen...Christ is Risen Indeed...Hallelujah and Amen.

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Scripture Reading: VU p. 837 *Psalm 118, Parts 1, 2, 3*

Refrain: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Let Israel now say:

"God's love endures for ever."

Let the house of Aaron say:

“God’s love endures for ever.”

Let those who fear God say:

“God’s love endures for ever.”

Refrain: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

God is my strength and my song;
God has become my salvation.

**There are shouts of joy and deliverance
in the tents of the righteous.**

The right hand of God does mighty things;
the right hand of God raises up.

The right hand of God does mighty things.

I shall not die, but live;
and I shall proclaim what God has done.

**God indeed punished me,
but did not give me over to death.**

Refrain: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Open to me the gates of the temple,
that I may enter and give thanks to God.

**This is the gate of God;
through it the righteous shall enter.**

I thank you for you have answered me;
you have become my salvation.

**The stone which the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.**

This is God’s doing, marvellous in our eyes.
This is the day that God has made,

let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Refrain: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Let us pray: We believe in resurrection — mysterious, beyond our understanding, and yet, like tulips after the snow: real. We believe in Easter morning — in the promise of a God who would roll back every stone to return to us. We believe in Jesus — who calls us by name and asks, “Who are you looking for?”

So, we look — for justice, for mercy, for God in our midst. And as we look, we sing, “Alleluia!”
Amen.

Message: “I can’t find Jesus.”

Poem: *Lost and Found* (Read by Bev Chapman and Diane Trollope)

Mary wept.

Standing in the garden, soft dirt under her feet,
sun still tucked away, sleeping under the horizon.
The other disciples left, but Mary stayed.

Mary wept.

Shoulders shaking, tears running down her face.

She said,

They have taken my Lord away,
and I don’t know where they put him.

But here's what Easter taught me:
if you think you've lost God, if it feels like heaven has slipped
through the cracks, if you feel like the night will never end,
then know, there is no hide-and-seek with the divine
that doesn't end in you being found.
Stay still. Keep breathing. God is closer than you think.

Offering Moment & Announcements

Welcome to St. Andrew's on this Easter Sunday.

Thank you for sharing both your talents and treasures. 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 all you do!!

There will be no Social Hour tonight as people have plans with friends and family. Social Hour will be back next Sunday.

Communion Hymn: MV 147 God, Help Us to Treasure

1. God, help us to treasure these moments of myst'ry;
to hallow the Sacred in all that we do.
Throughout every season may we be your agents
of love, joy, and blessing as hearts are renewed.
2. God, help us to honour your presence among us
in newborn, in elder, in family in need.
By sharing with others we soon will discover
your kindness and loving in generous deeds.
3. God, help us to value each moment of wonder
when peace shall o'ershadow our sorrow and pain.
In times shared at Table with all who are kindred,
may we find the healing to sing Love's refrain.

Dedication Prayer/Offering

As we offer our gifts on this joyous morning, may they bring light to those in the shadows, laughter to all who mourn, and hope to those longing for life anew. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Sacrament of Communion

ALL are welcome at this table – all who want to follow Jesus in love and justice. In our diversity, we are welcomed to God's table of abundance, so that we might take the Good News of radical welcome to all that we meet.

May resurrection's God be with you!

And also with you!

This is the day to offer yourselves to God.

We open our hearts to the One who fills them with grace.

Join in the glad songs of all creation this day.

Our voices praise the One who opens wide the gates of life.

When only emptiness stretched out,
you spoke at that time, Joyous God,
and goodness and beauty sprang forth:
swallows darting in the skies,
young rabbits scampering in the grass,
hippos splashing in rivers.

All this wonder and joy was your gift
to your children created in your image,
but we ran to play with death,
when sin opened the gates of seduction.

Time after time after time,
you sent the prophets to remind us
of your never-ending love, but
we chose to remain in sin's tomb,
the stone of our rebellion locking us away.
So you sent your Hopeful heart,
your grace made flesh so
we might not be given over to death.

With those who see and believe,
with those who stand and question,
we lift our Easter songs to you:
Holy, holy, holy are you, God who has made this day!
All creation celebrates your constant love.
Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed is the One who is revealed on this morning.
Hosanna in the highest!

When he could have clung to your glory,
God who alone is holy,
Jesus chose to become human at that time,
so we might be filled with your grace.

When we stood against the wall
wondering if anyone noticed us,
he came to take us by the hand
to teach us new dance steps.

When our lives crumble around us
and we lie scattered on the ground,
he gathers us up, reshaping us
into your beloved community.

When we were unable to break
the power of evil over us,
he allowed sin to toss him
aside like a pebble in a shoe,
until he was raised from the tomb
because you refuse to give us
over to death.

As we stand before the empty tomb,
celebrating the great news of this day,
we would have that faith which is a mystery:
Christ died, so sin could not hold on to us;
Christ was raised, so death could not hold on to him;
Christ will come, to hold us in steadfast love and hope.

Let us remember together that vision of God's reign
shown to us in Jesus at table:
he shared food with followers and friends,

with saints and sinners,
with crowds of thousands on the hillside,

and a few friends in an upper room.

**On the night before he died,
he had supper with his companions.**

He took a loaf of bread, and after giving thanks,
he broke it, and gave it to them, saying:

“Take, eat. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Then, he took a cup, and after giving thanks,
he passed it among them, saying:

“Drink this. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Through this loaf and cup, Jesus lives within us.

In word and deed, Jesus lives among us.

Prayers of Community

Rainbow colours, vibrant and dancing across the path of life.

Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet, filling our lives with wonder, hope, and possibility.

Jesus came, sharing the path of human life, declaring and living possibility in the midst of poverty,
freedom in the midst of Roman occupation,

hope in the midst of despair,

joy in the midst of sorrow.

When betrayal and death grabbed hold, burying Jesus in a cold, empty tomb,

**Jesus burst forth in a vibrant display of life,
shattering the worst that Rome could do to him,
shattering the worst that life could do to him.**

Jesus rose from the dead, declaring once again,
wonder and life, hope and possibility.

And so we declare with joy and power on this day,
Christ is risen.

Christ is risen, indeed, Hallelujah!

Loving God, we know that Creation is always in Flux. There are the Hallelujahs of babies born healthy, and a surprisingly good diagnosis. But there are also situations that cause us grief. People of Ukraine continue to suffer, as do the people of Syria, Myanmar. Women and children continue to be the hardest hit victims of humanly created climate change, and profound economic inequity and injustice, near and far.

We know that even as we love this global village, you created it and your vision looms of bringing peace and healing, shalom. In silence we offer our personal Hallelujahs and prayers for Help in this silent moment...

All this we pray along with the traditional version of Jesus' prayer...

The Prayer that 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, for ever and ever. Amen.

At this time, in this place,
pour out your Spirit upon your people
and on the gifts of the feast of the resurrection.
May the bread which is broken open like the tomb,
strengthen us so we may go
to rebuild shattered hopes,
to bind up the hurts of the world.

May the cup which is filled
with the fruits of your steadfast love,
nourish us to leave the shadows
of our fears and doubts
to stand with the lonely and forgotten,
to listen to the cries of the world.

These are the gifts of God, for the People of God.

Choir Anthem: *Christ the Lord Is Risen Again*

We Partake in Communion

All is ready, come, all who wish to follow Jesus on this journey.

The Bread of Life for all of us.
The Cup of Blessing in Christ.

Prayer after Communion

Let us go with God into the world.
We will offer healing and hope to all
who wander in the shadows of life.
Let us go with Jesus to serve others.
We will listen to the ignored;
we will speak out for the forgotten.
Let us go with the Spirit to share steadfast love.
We will hold on to the fallen;
We will rebuild shattered communities.

Closing Hymn: VU 169 *Christians All Rejoice and Sing*, vv. 1, 2, 4

1. Good Christians all, rejoice and sing!
Now is the triumph of our King!
To all the world glad news we bring:
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

2. The Lord of life is risen today!
Bring flowers of song, bedeck the way;
let every tongue rejoice and say:
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

4. Your name we bless, O risen Lord,
and sing today with one accord
the life laid down, the life restored:
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

Blessing

Beyond death is abundant life.
We will live it.

Beyond the shadows of hatred and isolation is the light that draws us into community.
We will follow it.

Beyond the stone-covered tomb is a dance called resurrection.

We will move with it.

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

May we all live in the Love of God, the fullness of life in Christ, and always in the company of God's Spirit. Amen.

Choral Blessing: *The Lord Bless You and Keep You*

Postlude

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