



**Guildwood Community Presbyterian Church**  
140 Guildwood Parkway, Scarborough, Ontario  
M1E 1P4

## **Worship for Guildwood Community Presbyterian Church, April 12, 2020 – Easter Sunday**

Dear Friends,

The Lord is risen. He is risen indeed! Once again we are happy to provide you with some aids for worship during this time of Covid-19, or as one of our sons calls it, "Coronocation". For Bob and I, this is the first time in our lives that we have not been part of a public worship service on Easter. We pray for the unity of the Spirit, the presence of the risen Christ, the love of God to be with us all as we are physically distant, but joined by our common faith.

Rev. Helen Smith

### **Opening Hymn**

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Book of Praise – 243 "[Jesus Christ is risen today](#)"

YouTube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sj9ljVsfk> ← click this link

- video recorded by BBC, with on-screen lyrics, verses 1–3

### **Prayers of Adoration and Affirmation**

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Gracious God, in Christ we are made alive. We can be blind, but you open our eyes to see your glory revealed through Christ. We can be deaf, but you unstop our ears to hear the power of your resurrection story. God we can be dumb, but you set free our tongues to rejoice and sing your praises with all the hosts of heaven. With fear and great joy, we move into the future where you are already, waiting for us there. You transfigure our world with the Spirit of life. To you be all glory and praise. We pray in the name of the risen Christ and continue to pray as he taught, saying:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those  
who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen

### **Assurance of Pardon**

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Christ is risen! The stone is rolled away, the tomb found empty. The women tell the others they have seen the Lord. We have seen Christ too, in every helping hand, in every heartfelt gift, in every choice to restore life in this world. We are called to this new life, a life of forgiveness and reconciliation. We are forgiven. Accept this and know that God loves you and wants great joy for your life. Walk forward on this journey of faith, knowing your sisters and brothers are with you. Amen.

### **The Peace**

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Jesus said: I have come that you may have life in abundance.  
The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

### **Scripture**

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[Matthew 28: 1–10](#) ← this links to on-line text of the NRSV bible  
[Click here](#) for additional scripture readings from today's lectionary. Links courtesy of the [Revised Common Lectionary](#), a project of the [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

### **Sermon**

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Have you seen the video that is making the rounds on YouTube  
— two young brothers, 12 year old twins,  
performing Coldplay's "Viva la Vida" (Long live life!)  
while in quarantine in Italy —  
where as of last Wednesday,  
there were 139,422 cases with the corona virus and 17,689 deaths.  
Yet this performance is pure joy.  
Here is the link —

I encourage you to click on this and watch it now.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duX6vQvI9KU>

I can think of no better symbol for Easter.  
In the midst of such death there is life.

Easter is about God bringing life out of death.  
And that is what God wants to do for us every day.

Nobody expected Easter —  
    even though Jesus had told them to —  
Nobody expected Easter —  
Those women who went to the tomb that morning  
    weren't prepared for what they saw.  
We had hints, long before Easter,  
    that God was in the business of life, not death —  
Actually, the whole saving history of God's dealing with us  
    is a story of the steady overcoming of death with life —  
The resurrection is the final signal, not the opening shot,  
    that death has at last been crushed -  
Every time somebody once crippled stands up and walks,  
    or blind eyes see,  
        or prisoners break free,  
            death is losing its grip.  
Life is having its way with death.

[William Willimon](#), Chaplain at Duke University  
    tells of when Amy, a much-loved freshman at Duke,  
        faithful member of the choir,  
            was crushed by a bus.  
The therapist told the group of grieving students.  
    "You're all doing just fine,  
        right on schedule with your grief,  
            this is good."  
But five days later, at Amy's memorial service,  
    the Chapel Choir  
        (never ones to respect authority —  
            must be something about choirs!)  
stood and sang defiantly, raucously,  
    "For as in Adam all die,  
        even so in Christ shall all be made alive!"  
Death slinked off the campus,  
    death's great victory party ruined  
        by a choir that refused to defer to death.  
  
Because - God brings life.

Remember how the Hebrew children were slaves in Egypt —  
“There arose a Pharaoh in Egypt who did not know Joseph,”  
says [Exodus 1:8](#).

That Pharaoh made the Hebrew children slaves,  
placed upon their backs unbearable burdens  
and killed their male babies.

Are you surprised that lots loved it in slavery?

“Oh, the work was hard,  
but at least we got three square meals a day.

Pharaoh’s slavery is not so bad once you learn to adjust.

The bent back grows calloused to the sting of the master’s whip.  
Adapt. Adjust to this death.”

But God has another idea -

To Moses, minding his own business, a bush bursts into flame.

A voice says “I have heard the cry of my people.  
I’m going to free them,  
I am going to go head-to-head with Pharaoh,  
and guess who’s going to help me?”

Moses stammered. But...

And sure enough, through Moses, God set those people free.  
God brought life.

Israel, once free, was not free for long.

From the north came chariots, warhorses,  
iron spears of the Assyrians.

And then the Babylonians.

Cities were burned and pillaged.

Whole Hebrew tribes carted off into cruel exile.

Death. Deportation. Defeat.

But then along comes

a sharp-tongued prophet, Jeremiah,

and he promises return to the exiles.

points the way toward a great homecoming party,

a great “dance of the merrymakers”

to rival anything we’ve ever seen  
in Nathan Phillips Square.

Tyrants — Assyrian, Babylonian, or any other, get edgy, nervous,  
They want to call out the RCMP  
whenever people on the bottom get uppity,  
begin to make music, pull out tambourines, dance.  
And would they ever have had the fortitude to dance  
if God hadn't brought life to them?

A little backwater town in Judea in the first century of the common era.  
Roman troops on every corner,  
registering these Jews,  
enrolling them in order better to oppress, suppress them.  
The greatest, most powerful army in service to the most ruthless dictator,  
what can anybody do?  
Babylonians, Romans, it's all the same.  
Adjust, keep your head down, say your prayers.

But down in the ghetto, in a stable out back,  
a young woman begins to sing:  
"My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour...  
he has scattered the proud...  
he has brought down the powerful from their thrones."  
Mary — why do you clench your fist and sing?  
Mary replies, "Well, I'm going to have a baby."

God brings life.

Friday took no one by surprise.  
If you know anything about the facts of death,  
the way the religio-politico-economic establishment works,  
then you know that Jesus was doomed from the start.  
The way he disregarded the social conventions,  
eating with tax collectors, prostitutes.  
The way he reached out to the marginalized.  
The names he called the clergy!  
Friday's bloody business at Calvary comes as no surprise.  
You can't fight City Hall.  
Caesar had the troops.  
The crowd turned against us.

The one who came inviting us all to life,  
now nailed to the cross.

Dead.

"It was a good campaign while it lasted,  
but we didn't get him elected Messiah," we said.

The disciples told the women,

"You go on out to the cemetery and take these flowers,  
show our last respects to Jesus.

We'll come later, when it's day."

And the women went out to the city of death,  
peered into the tomb —

Surprise —

God brings life.

On the way back from the cemetery

Jesus meets them and says, "Greetings!"

And the graveyard flowers they're holding look silly,  
and they fall down and worship because —

God brings life.

The shout of the women, we've heard it before.

That day, as Pharaoh's chariots foundered and the sea surged back,  
in the great homecoming for exiles promised by Jeremiah,  
in Mary's war-chant lullaby —  
we've heard it before.

Greetings. God brings life.

When will we get used to death's defeat and the incursions of God?

That the whole history of God's intrusions among us  
is the tale of the defeat of death's dominion?

Easter just keeps happening.

When will we get it into our brains?

God brings life.

That's Easter, a story begun long before Easter,  
And continued long after,  
a story not yet done with us.

God brings life.

Saul was a stickler for the rules,  
Bound up in legalities and protocol,  
Imprisoned by his persecution, his hatred of Christ's followers.  
And then he experiences the risen Christ on the road to Damascus  
And, as Paul, he would come to write —  
for freedom, Christ has set us free ([Galatians 5:1](#))  
and — we are afflicted but not crushed,  
perplexed but not driven to despair,  
persecuted, but not forsaken,  
struck down but not destroyed. ([2 Cor 4: 8,9](#))

God brings life.

They told Kathy, "once a drunk, always a drunk.  
It's like a disease, something genetic in your family,  
something in the blood, fixed."  
This woman whom she knew at work slipped her a note one morning.  
"I know what you're going through," the note said.  
"Been there myself.  
I can show you a way out if you're ready to be free."  
I called it her AA group. She attributed it to the fact that

God brings life.

Cancer? Terminal. Untreatable.  
Nothing to be done, they said. Curtains.  
Jack said, "I will be living with it, not dying with it, every second I have."  
I called it grit.  
He said it was because, even in his illness,

God brings life.

Jack's grit was more than the fruit of his emotional resilience,  
more than just psychological chutzpa.  
It arose from the Christian conviction  
that God is in the death dominion business,  
that some mighty defeat of death  
has been worked in the world  
through the resurrection of Jesus  
that had relevance for his struggle with death.

Who are you going to believe?  
The world says get used to it - stuff happens.  
A university student is crushed by a bus.  
Pin the blame on somebody,  
grow up, adjust to reality, this is the way the world is.  
And then the choir sings the "Hallelujah Chorus".

Two young violinists living in the midst of death, say to that death —  
We beg to differ.  
Long live life.

It is the cry of Easter.  
We can hear it over and over again.  
God brings life! Amen.

### **Offertory Hymn**

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Book of Praise – 260 "Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord / Alleluia No. 1"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyPYJtxu8cE> ← click this link

- video with on-screen lyrics
- recorded on February 2014 at [First-Plymouth Congregational Church](#);  
Lincoln, Nebraska

### **Offertory**

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We remind everyone that we must continue to pay our bills; in the absence of Sunday worship, you may [sign up for pre-authorized remittance](#) (PAR), [donate online through the link on our website](#), or drop off your offering envelope in the mailbox at the church. The building will be checked daily for mail and phone messages. If you are not comfortable leaving an envelope, you are welcome to leave a phone message at the office (416.261.4037) and someone will pick up your offering.

## **Prayers of Thanksgiving and Hope**

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Christ is risen! O God, we give you thanks for the gift of Easter that runs beyond our expectations, beyond our categories of reason. We know about the powers of death, powers that persist among us, powers that drive us from you, and from our neighbour and from our best selves. We know about the powers of fear and greed and anxiety. And then you break through with joy, with life. Yours is the kingdom of life. Yours is the power of life. Yours is the glory of life. And we give you thanks for the newness beyond our achieving, beyond our imagining.

We give thanks for each new morning, for the rising of the sun, the singing of the birds, the refreshing rain. We thank you for the love of family, for the love of friends. In the darkness of pandemic, we give thanks for shopkeepers and custodians, truck drivers, health care workers, political leaders, for all who shine the light. We thank you for technology and the ways in which it helps us to keep in touch with one another.

Risen Christ, we give thanks for your gift of resurrection power and we open ourselves up to your invitation to join you in moving from death to life. We respond "Yes!" to your call to live.

You embrace the whole world with love and caring. And you ask us to show our love for you by tending and feeding the world and its people. Help us to recognize the people and situations where you are asking us to show your love.

We pray for people who cannot remain in their homes because their homes are not safe, or because they have no home. Gracious God, we pray for homes for people who are homeless.

We pray for people who are feeling alone, feeling afraid, feeling lost, feeling useless, feeling purposeless. Gracious God, embrace the isolated, that they may feel your presence with them, your love giving them a sense of self worth.

We pray for those who are ill with Covid19, those who suffer from other illnesses. We pray for them your healing, your wholeness.

We pray for your Church around the world as it strives to be your witness, your body in the world today. Inspire us, Holy Spirit, as we seek new ways of service. We pray for our congregation, giving thanks for those who are working to keep us connected,

those who are meeting by means of technology. Encourage our community as we form and re-form ourselves as your Body. Just as the revelations of Easter energized the first disciples, so we would be energized to dream new visions and be open to new risks and to the unknown.

We pray in the name of our risen Lord. AMEN.

### **Closing Hymn**

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Book of Praise – 258 “[Thine be the glory](#)”

YouTube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPH7-dNrwb8> ← click this link

- video with on-screen lyrics
- performed by the [Choir of King’s College, Cambridge](#)

### **Benediction**

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May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. AMEN ([Romans 15:13](#))

### **Organ Postlude**

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“Toccata”, the fifth movement of the [Symphony for Organ No. 5 in F minor, Op. 42, No. 1](#), by [Charles-Marie Widor](#).

<https://bit.ly/2RuIjdk> ← click this link

A big thank you to our organist and music director Rachelle Risling for making the recording at the sanctuary.