



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

Worship for Guildwood Community Presbyterian Church, April 26, 2020, the third Sunday in Easter

Dear Friends;

These worship resources are provided with the prayer that they will help us draw close together in mind and heart during these days when we must remain physically apart. If you have a copy of the Book of Praise at home, I encourage you to read through the words of Hymn 262, *Come to us, beloved Stranger*, as part of your worship. If you know of anyone from the congregation who would appreciate receiving a hard copy of these worship resources, please leave a message for Lisa at the church office, 416.261.4037, and we will make sure that one is delivered to their mailbox.

Rev. Helen Smith

Opening Hymn

Book of Praise – 250 “Lord of the Dance”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xkk0YodJqH8> ← click this link

- video with on-screen lyrics, which differ very slightly from the hymnbook
- recorded on June 29, 2014 at [First-Plymouth Congregational Church](#); Lincoln, Nebraska

Prayers of Adoration and Affirmation

Lord of heaven and earth, we rejoice in the things we see by Easter’s light. By Easter’s light we see that you love everything you have made. Nothing is despised. Nothing is beyond redemption. By Easter’s light we see that your plan has always been the permanence of love and the resilience of life. By Easter’s light we see connections between your power and our living. By Easter’s light we know you to be the invisible companion beside us in our walk each day. By Easter’s light we see that your strength can flourish in our weakness. By Easter’s light we see you are making us, ordinary as we are, into citizens of your kingdom. By Easter’s light we see that our sorrows, while not dispersed, are held in your heart where they are gently shaped into servants of love and hope.

Risen Lord, it is by Easter's light we worship. In it we dare to believe, to trust, to risk, to pray. Praise is our offering. Receive our sacrifice of praise this day

Even as we offer you our praises, we confess that we sometimes stray during our walk with you. Forgive us for wandering down paths that lead us to disregard your power and goodness. At times we ignore your grace and focus only on what we can envision, missing the signs of your power and love. Our faith can be shaken by the many things we do not understand. We find ourselves living by fear not hope.

Hear us now as we confess our own particular ways we have failed to live by Easter's light.

Help us to believe that you are in all things, that you are creating good that we cannot always see. Help us to trust that in you nothing is wasted. All is redeemed. Thanks be to you, O God.

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

Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old life has gone; a new life has begun. Know that we are forgiven. Amen.

The Peace

Let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. To this peace we are called as members of a single body. The peace of Christ be with you.

Scripture

[Luke 24: 13–35](#) ← 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](#).

Children's Story

Christian Education Coordinator Laura Alary has recorded two videos on YouTube. The first is the lectionary story (Luke 24: 13–35) told Children and Worship style (as we do in the Worship Centre).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsfSb93ukys> ← click this link

The second is for stories read from two books: from *Read, Wonder, Listen*; and from another picture book.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMosxecu3xQ> ← click this link

Sermon

The road to Emmaus —

Luke is the only gospel writer
who tells us the story of what happened on that road,
but everyone has walked it at one time or another.

It is the road you walk when you fail an important entrance exam,
when you lose a job,
when a relationship ends
when one you love has died —
the long road back to the empty house, the piles of unopened mail,
to life as usual, if life will ever be usual again.

It is the road of tragedy, senseless death and destruction,
the suffering experienced this week by the people of Nova Scotia,
and as fellow Canadians, that suffering touches us all.

We stand with them on that road of so much loss,
so much fear, so much sadness.

It is the road of deep disappointment,
and walking it is the living definition of sad,
just like the two disciples in today's story.

It takes two hours to walk seven miles
and that is how long they have to talk over the roller coaster events
of the past three days.

The trial, the crucifixion, the silent procession to the tomb.
And then the women's vision of angels, the empty grave.

They are talking it all over when the stranger comes up behind them
and asks them what they are talking about,
so that they stop in their tracks to look at him.

Who is he, Rip van Winkle?

"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem
who does not know the things that have happened there
in these days?" Cleopas asks him,
but the truth is they are both glad for his company
and so they walk with him,
matching their stride to his
as they tell him everything they know.

They tell him how things had looked so promising at first
when Jesus impressed everyone with his eloquence and mighty acts,
and then how things had gone wrong, horribly wrong,
so that there was finally nothing left for them to do
but to go back home, dragging their feet in the dust.

"We had hoped he was the one to redeem Israel." they say to him,
admitting their defeat.

"We had hoped."

Hope in the past tense,
one of the saddest sounds a human being can make.

We had hoped he was the one.

We believed things might really change, but we were wrong.

He died.

It is over now.

No more fairy tales.

No more illusions.

Back to business as usual.

That is when their walking partner explodes at them.

"Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart!" he says to them.

Or in other words, "You idiots!"

If you had read your Bibles,

none of this would come as a surprise to you.

It is right there in black and white:

The Christ is not the undefeated champion;

he is the suffering servant,

the broken one,

who comes into his glory with his wounds still visible.

Those hurt places are the proof that he is who he says he is,
because the way you recognize the Christ — and his followers —
is not by their muscles but by their scars.

Which means

that they — and we —
are not to despise the painful parts of our lives anymore.

Which means

that they — and we -
are not to interpret our defeats as failures anymore.

Which means that they -and we —

are not to fear our enemies anymore,
not even death itself.

Starting with Moses and working his way through the prophets,
the stranger opens the scriptures to them
and they hang on his words.

He is a gifted preacher, but it is more than that.

They are wounded, and what he is telling them is good, good news.
Maybe they aren't losers after all.

Maybe the rumours are true.

Maybe there is reason to resurrect their crucified hope.

So when they arrive at their village and he shakes their hands goodbye,
they will not let him go.

They have not gotten enough of him yet,

so they invite him to stay with them and he does.

He is an odd guest, though.

It is their house, their food, their table,
but when the three of them sit down together,
it is he, the guest, who acts as host,
who reaches out, takes the bread,
says the blessing, breaks the bread,
and gives it to them.

Maybe it is the oddness of the act

that makes the shingles fall from their eyes,

or maybe it is the familiarity of it —

something they have seen him do before on a green hillside
with five loaves and two fish,

in an upper room with unleavened bread and Passover wine.

He takes, blesses, breaks, gives —
and through the torn, fragrant edges of the loaf
he holds out to them,
they look at him and know who he is,
one moment before he vanishes from their sight.

And they are so excited — not despondent anymore —
They run back to Jerusalem to tell the others.

The blindness of the two disciples
does not keep Christ from coming to them.
He does not limit his post-resurrection appearances
to those with full confidence in him.
He comes to the disappointed, the doubtful, the disconsolate.
He comes to those who do not know their Bibles,
who do not recognize him
even when they are walking right beside him.
He comes to those who have given up and headed back home,
which makes this whole story
a story about the blessedness of brokenness.

Which is good news if you happen to be broken,
which is pretty much all of us.
I have heard those outside the church accuse us of being a smug little club
who think we know everything and have perfect lives —
nothing bad ever happens to us.
You and I both know that couldn't be further from the truth.
Jesus works with broken people,
with broken dreams, in a broken world.
If someone hands him a whole loaf, he will take it, bless it,
break it, and give it,
and he will do the same thing with his own flesh and blood,
because that is the way of life God has shown him
to show the rest of us;
to take what we have been given,
whether we like it or not, and to bless it —
to say thank you for it —
whether it is the sweet satisfying bread of success
or the tear-soaked bread of sorrow.

To say thank you and to break it
because that is the only way it can be shared,
and to hand it around, not to eat it all by ourselves
but to find someone to eat it with,
so that the broken loaf may bring all of us broken ones together
into one body,
where we may recognize the risen Lord in our midst.

Beginning to end, Luke's story of what happened on the road to Emmaus
is a perfect little address book for the living God.

First there is the closeness of the two disciples on the road,
and then their kindness to a stranger.

Then there is the way their hearts burned within them
when he opened the scriptures to them,
and how they knew him in the breaking of the bread.

Count them — fellowship, hospitality, word, and sacrament —
all the ways Christ has promised to be present with us,
which also happen to be the everyday activities of the church.

Not the building, or the institution,
but the people of God — us —
who attend to one another,
to strangers,
to God's word and sacraments as a way of life.

A lot of it happens other places,
but the breaking of bread at Holy Communion
can break you right open,

Sometimes you can be right in the middle of it
when suddenly the tears start rolling down.
It is like the gates to your heart have opened
and everything you have ever loved comes tumbling out
to be missed and praised and mourned and loved some more.

It is like being known all the way down.

It is like being in the presence of God.

One moment you see him, and the next you do not.

One moment your eyes are opened
and you recognize the risen Christ
and the next he vanishes from your sight.

Take heart. This is no ghost. Do not be afraid.
You cannot lose him for good.
This is a place he has promised to be,
and this is the place he returns to meet us
over and over again.
And I can hardly wait until we are able to be together
and break bread together once again.

Let us pray.

Meet us, Lord, on the road to Emmaus,
During these days of physical distancing, guide us on the path toward our destination,
and renew our strength as we continue to walk with you.
Open our eyes, so we see the signs of your presence around us, despite our isolation,
despite our disappointments, despite our fear.
Open our hearts, so we may receive your peace and love; and empower us to pass on
to others the grace you have shared with us so freely. Amen

Musical meditation

Musical director Rachele Risling performs a meditation on Hymn 549 "For the bread which you have broken"

[Audio link](#) ← click this link to listen to the audio of the performance.

Offertory

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 via our CanadaHelps page](#), or drop off your offering envelope in the mailbox at the church. **Do not leave a cash donation** unattended in the mailbox; instead, please call the office (416.261.4037) to ensure someone will be there to receive it. The building will be checked daily for mail and phone messages. If you are not comfortable leaving an envelope, you are welcome to contact the office (once again, 416.261.4037) and someone will pick up your offering.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Hope

Great, giving God, we thank you for the blessings that are showered on us each day, for a phone call or Facetime from a friend, a video chat with a grandchild or grandparent, the emergence from the soil of spring flowers. We thank you for all those who are working so that we have food in our homes, and electricity, and the telephone. We thank you for the public servants, for teachers, police officers, fire fighters, health care providers who are working so hard to keep us all safe and sound. We thank you for our governments who are working all the time to help provide for us what we need.

We thank you, O God, for your presence with us, when hope seems lost. We thank you for your church universal and for our congregation, working to scatter resurrection's power amid the needs of the world.

And we pray for those needs. We pray especially today for the people of Nova Scotia. For those who have lost loved ones in the senseless killing one week ago, we pray that underneath them, they will know your everlasting arms, holding them up.

We pray for the earth, for the healing of the earth, for energy and wisdom as we care for the environment.

We pray for the situations and individuals who are important to us.

We pray for the Search Committee meeting this afternoon. Grant to them your discerning Spirit as they search for a minister for our congregation.

We pray for parents, balancing working from home or struggling with unemployment, with home schooling.

We think of those who live alone, those who fear for their livelihood, those who fear for their health.

We pray for the health workers who are overworked and exhausted.

And we pray for their patients. We pray for those who are ill, and those who are dying.

We pray for those in long term care facilities, for their families, for their caregivers.

For all these situations and individuals, may the light of Easter shine in the darkness. We pray in the name of our risen Lord. Amen

Closing Hymn

Book of Praise – 371 “Love divine, all loves excelling”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GenHMi5B7L4> ← click this link

- video with on-screen lyrics, with one minor text difference from the hymnbook
- recorded on May 21, 2017 at [First-Plymouth Congregational Church](#); Lincoln, Nebraska

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord be kind and gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favour, and give you peace.

Alleluia! Amen.