

ST. DAVID'S UNITED CHURCH

April 21, 2019

EASTER SUNDAY CELEBRATION

Growing and Deepening our Spiritual Lives in an Affirming and Inclusive Community

Welcome to St. David's United Church

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Easter Sunday Celebration, April 21, 2019

Presiding – Peggy McDonagh

We gather as a Risen People in a Community of Faith

Welcome to worship today. Regardless of your age, stage, gender, sexual identity, or how great or small you feel your faith is, we each bring something of ourselves to this sacred place. By the Spirit of Jesus may Easter be released among us. Let us awake with joy into the way of Jesus.

PRELUDE *Organ Concerto In B flat Major HWV 294* G. F. Handel

I. Andante Allegro II. Larghetto III. Allegro Moderato

WELCOME

I invite you to quiet your body and mind, take a breath.
Feel your heart beat. Feel the air as you breathe.
We are here, listening, waiting, hoping, longing to sense,
to feel, to experience the Holy and the amazing birth of
new life and renewed love in our hearts.

ANTHEM: *Calvary's Love*

SCRIPTURE READING Mark 16:1-16

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb, and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As the women entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, the one crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.

ENTRANCE INTO WORSHIP

A word comes to us of an empty tomb,
of strange images, brighter than the morning sun,
announcing a new beginning, a new creation, God doing a new thing.

**We hear a word that the Christ
has gone ahead of us,
beckoning us away
from the rubble and busyness of our lives.**

We hear an astonishing message,
Jesus is risen, risen as love in our hearts.

Jesus is risen! Love is alive! Halleluia!

Let this declaration of love resound not only in these walls
but forever be the guiding light in our lives
illuminating the hearts of all we meet.

Halleluia! Jesus is risen! He is risen in our hearts!

OPENING HYMN Jesus Christ is Risen Today!

VU# 155

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

Halleluia! Life is renewed. Love blesses us with hope and courage. We are not alone. We light this Christ Candle in thanks for the **LOVING LIGHT** of the Risen One shining through all our acts of understanding, compassion, trust, and daring enabling us to bring new life to one another.

PRAYER

(Adapted from prayer by Richard Bott,

Vancouver)

God of Hope and New Life, in a world,
where the turn of the globe
seems to bring new stories
of destruction and death,
Open our senses

**to the beauty of the birdsong,
the hope in a smile,**

**the wonder of a comforting touch,
the warmth of a gentle smile,
and to the vibrant new life of Spring.**

Open our minds and hearts,
**that we might, with courage and truth, show
love for all people no matter
their race, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation,
and economic status.
For it is this amazing grace and love,
made alive by Jesus and resurrected this day,
that we celebrate, knowing
that such grace and love
invites a new way to live,
every moment, every day.
May it always be so for us, always.**

FAITH CHAT AND SONG

INTRODUCTION

All around us creation moves through the slow quiet process of renewal. Winter has bent in homage to springtime's nudge. On this day we are aware of the energy and excitement in creation as spring greets us.

Lured by spring's light and warmth creatures are being born and insects come out of hiding, the robin's song echoes in the dawn's light,

and a bright sun heats the day. Soon the sun's energy will emerge
through tulips, daffodils, raked grass and dawning possibilities;
springtime trembles within the ground and in our hearts as we
anticipate warming days, blooming trees, tilling the earth, colorful new
birth, and breathing in the freshness of a spring morning after a
refreshing rain.

The spirit of resurrection is strong and apparent in the melting,
the emerging, the endings and beginnings of spring.

HYMN Give praise for springtime days (Tune: VU #225)
(Text: Rev. Peggy McDonagh)

Give praise for springtime days, the blue bright shining ways,
that bring us healing, hope and joy, give praise for springtime days.

Give praise for spring's bright sun, its golden shining fun,
that calms the heart with warming light, give praise for spring's bright sun.

Give praise for fresh spring rain, the softly falling rain,
that stirs new growth within the land, give praise for fresh spring rain.

May springtime calm your soul, your busy, churning soul,
and bring it quietness and peace, may springtime bless your soul.

REFLECTION I Easter is about endings. . .

Poem Mary's Easter Prayer by Ronald Rolheiser, OMI

I never suspected

Resurrection . . .to be so painful. . .to leave me weeping
with joy.

To have met you, alive and smiling, outside an Empty tomb . . .with regret.

Not because I've lost you

But because I've lost you how I had you –

In understandable, touchable, warming flesh

Not as fully Divine, but as graspably human.

I want to cling, despite your protest

Cling to your concreteness

To your beautiful humanity

Cling to what we had, our past.

But I know that . . . if I cling. . .I will be stuck

left clinging to your former self. . . unable to receive your present spirit.

After the crucifixion of Jesus by the ruling government, his
closest followers faced a difficult ending because everything they had
come to value and love about their relationship with Jesus, ended.

The concreteness, safety and security of their relationships and their faith in his message of hope, all now lost within the clouds of despair.

Endings are difficult.

While Mary and the disciples grieved the end of their mentor and teacher's life, what was most fearful, and disconcerting was the ending of what they had experienced with Jesus. They grieved the loss of the way he valued them when others diminished them. They mourned the end of God's love that he showered upon them, in a world in which the righteous reserved God's love for themselves. Most of all, they grieved the end of Jesus' vision for a world shaped by justice and compassion; a world starkly different from the existing oppressive and unjust powers. Their hearts longed for Jesus'

unwavering determination to manifest God's value and love for all people.

Endings are difficult and final: loved ones die, a valued friendship ends, retirement happens, illness replaces health, divorce occurs, people move from beloved homes into long-term care, insecurity replaces security and safety, and unemployment replaces jobs and livelihoods. Beyond the deep regret and sadness connected with such permanent absences, there is also a part of us that mourns the ending itself; we lament the ending of what was.

Endings change everything, they uproot us. We are not just upset about having to do things differently or to experience life differently, we are mourning the ending of the life we have come to expect, the life of which we were accustomed and desperately want

back. Mary mourned what was gone, the permanence of Jesus, his human self, his aliveness, and warmth. She grieved the ending of Jesus' loving humanity that reassured her that her life mattered and that her existence was important and meaningful.

Endings are an inevitable and natural part of life; of this we know and have no ability to alter, but what we can alter is how we respond to the ending. We can react with anger, bitterness, and resentment or we can open ourselves to the power of the resurrection, the new life that awaits us in that ending.

At a place of death, Mary grapples with life. She thinks to herself, 'This ending you have just been through has changed you forever. Can I leave this ending and be open to what awaits me?' Mary knows that if she clings to her grief and her desire for her previous life, she

will be unable to receive her teacher's present spirit. Her encounter in the garden awakened her to an understanding that Jesus' death was not just an ending it was also a new beginning.

ANTHEM *Forever We Sing Hallelujah*

REFLECTION II Resurrection – the birth of new beginnings

Paul, of the ancient Christian world, was a powerful witness to the resurrection of the Christ. For him, the resurrection was not the resuscitation of a corpse, but it was more than a metaphor. For Paul, the resurrection was a transformative power that he experienced personally and believed wholeheartedly. In his letter to the Ephesian Christians Paul writes, "Christ is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to God's power that is at work within us."

For the early Christians, the festival of Easter was an affirmation of God's power at work within them that enabled them to accomplish more than they could ever dared to imagine. Out of a devastating ending, awareness grew; the disciples acknowledged that while Jesus had died, his teachings about justice, fairness, equality, and compassion had not. It was Jesus' parables and his demonstration of God's absolute love that became a transformative power of change. The new beginning for the disciples was that they would no longer be followers of Jesus but teachers and spokespersons responsible for keeping Jesus' message alive.

It was Paul who proclaimed this Christ power that brought new life out of death, communion out of profound alienation and hope out of suffering. Easter is about hope. We are living in turbulent times

marked by violence, unrest, increasing anxiety and depression, loss of faith and community, and lack of security and fear. We keep in our prayers this day the people Sri Lanka as they mourn the violent loss of life.

People of the world hunger for an encounter with something more significant than the pain and struggles of life. Easter hope affirms that life is greater than our overwhelming experiences.

American author Suzanne Collins, who wrote *The Hunger Games* trilogy, beautifully describes the hope of spring. "What I need is the dandelion in the spring," she writes. "The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction. The promise that life can go on, no matter how bad our losses. That it can be good again."

Poet Lilia Royers wrote this about hope.

“First a howling blizzard woke us,

and then the rain came down to soak us:

And now before our eyes can focus, CROCUS!”

Like Mary, there are moments when we can't see beyond our pain or self-concern, we can't see through the rainstorm, and then we experience the quiet motion of hope, a crocus in the snow.

Resurrection is God's 'yes' to life.”

Easter invites us to embrace our endings and open our hearts to new beginnings, in so doing to open ourselves to the transformative power of the Christ spirit. What is this Christ power? According to the late Jack Layton it is knowing that “love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair.”

The transformative message that we celebrate this joyous day is to have “courage to love others when they don’t love you in return, to show compassion, when others are heaping judgment.” It is to live peaceably when others are being violent, to work for justice when others are working for wealth. It is “to respond with gentleness when others are reacting with rage, and to trust that life, well-lived, even if short-lived, is preferable to longevity without value.” Easter calls each of us to be loving, peace-seeking, hopeful, gentle and optimistic and in so doing we will change our hearts and the heart of the world.

This day I invite you to listen! Listen to how quietly the earth breathes forth life, how eagerly the sun bleeds forth the spring. The seeds are stirring and making noise. Listen to the seeds within you breaking open, awakening Divine love, compassion, honesty and

kindness. Live fully and deeply. Welcome the growth that is occurring
in the garden of creation and in the garden of our heart. Amen.

HYMN The Day of Resurrection - *adapted from Hymn VU #164*

The day of resurrection! Send praises far and wide
Let voices sing our gladness, let hearts in God abide.
From death to life arising, from fear to hope anew,
our Christ transformed within us, changed all that we once knew.

May hearts burst wide with joyous praise, as now we see a-right
Love's brilliant love arising to birth renewing light,
and, listening to the accents, we hear so calm and plain
Love's great triumphant chorus, a loud and joyful strain.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Thank everyone for joining us at St. David's for our Easter Sunday celebration. Happy Easter to all of you.
2. Following worship please join us in the TM room for hot cross buns, tea, coffee, and fellowship
3. For those who donated flowers in memory or in honor of loved ones you can pick up the flowers following worship. There will be sleeves provided in the back of the foyer.
4. Parents can pick up their children after worship at the front of the church.
5. On Sunday, April 28 following worship the St. David's Chameleon Drama Club will be performing two short plays based on the themes of friendship and families under unusual circumstances. If you enjoy

laughing, unexpected turns of events, and a bit of danger, this is the production for you. A light lunch will be offered prior to the drama.

INVITATION TO OFFER OUR GIFTS

What can we possibly offer the God of New Life to express our gratitude for the resurrection we see all around us in new shoots bursting from the earth, butterflies soon to emerge from cocoons, and earth letting go of winter's freeze. We raise our voices in praise, we give our gifts of labor and generosity, we give our commitment to love, and we open our heart to joy through this our offering.

OFFERTORY

OFFERING DEDICATION

(Tune VU #537)

Our Easter offering now we bring,
our living faith expressed,
we offer these most lovingly,
and know our hearts are blessed.

MEDITATION OF THE HEART (Performed by Esira Dance)

THE JESUS PRAYER

BRINGING FORTH THE SYMBOLS OF NEW LIFE

On this Easter Day of joy and hope, resurrection stirs in all people and in nature. Easter calls us out, names us, and reminds us to take our place in

life with renewed energy and understanding. Let us now bring for the symbols of new life.

HYMN The Spring Has Come

VU #187

EASTER LITANY

This Easter we celebrate the indestructible love and wisdom that Jesus showed to his world.

We will gladly follow in his Way!

We will be resurrected in love

as we forgive and not hold on to hurts.

We will be resurrected in love

as we give until it makes a difference.

We will be resurrected in love

as we resist racism, hate, and all forms of violence.

We will be resurrected in love

**as we feed the hungry, shelter the homeless
and befriend the lonely.**

We will be resurrected in love

**as we demonstrate our faith in a God of love
by valuing all life and loving unconditionally.**

Christ's Spirit is alive.

Risen anew in our hearts! Hallelujah!

ANTHEM *"Hallelujah Chorus" from 'Messiah'*

G.F. Handel

(An invitation is extended to people who love this piece and would like to come and join the choir to create a great chorale of voices in praise. Scores are available. Come; join this amazing Chorus of Celebration.)

BENEDICTION

Easter is constantly rising around
and within us. . .
new life breaks out.
Divine Life is alive within, between and beyond us.
May we embrace resurrection each day
may blessings be upon us as we live.
Let the Christ light burst forth from you
and shine upon all you meet this and every day.

MUSICAL BLESSING

We are rising in the Love of God, we are rising in the Love of God,
We are rising in the Love of God, we are rising in the Love of God.
We are rising, we are rising, we are rising in the Love of God. X 2

We are joyful on this Easter Day, we are joyful on this Easter Day.

We are joyful on this Easter Day, we are joyful on this Easter Day.

We are joyful, we are joyful, we are joyful on this Easter Day. X 2

POSTLUDE