

St. Andrew's United Church (Williams Lake)

March 28, 2021

**Palm Sunday & The Lord's Supper
(Zoom, email, regular mail)**

ORDER OF SERVICE

Welcome & Land Acknowledgement

Welcome to the gathering of the family of Jesus. We gather on lands walked for thousands of years by people of the First Nations. We acknowledge the history, culture, and spirituality of the Secwépemc (Shuswap) People. We also honour the heritage and gifts of the Métis people. We remember our responsibility as persons who inhabit this land alongside our First Nations and Métis sisters and brothers. May we live the respect that our words offer.

In the name of Jesus, who is alive in each of us, peace to you.
And also with you.

*Invitation to take and release three slow, deep breaths
and allow the space you're in to become worship space for this time*

Written by Susan Lukey. Adapted by Nancy Colton.
Gathering, Lent/Easter 2021, page 29.
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to ground and center ourselves for worship

We Light the Christ Candle

Hymn – He Came Riding on a Donkey

VU 124

Call to Worship

One: Hosanna!

All: Hosanna!

One: Hallelujah!

All: Hallelujah!

Christ the Lord is near.

One: Hosanna!

All: Hosanna!

One: Hallelujah!

All: Hallelujah!

Christ the Lord is here!

One: With well-loved songs,

**All: and waving palms,
we celebrate his Way!**

One: Hosanna!

All: Hallelujah!

One: Welcome Christ the Lord, today!

Written by Richard Bott.

Gathering, Lent/Easter 2021, page 38.

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Opening Prayer

Today we celebrate, God –
because we know the story.

We celebrate that Jesus
walked with his disciples,
talked with his people,
was loved by his family.

We celebrate that, through them,
we have come to know him.

Help us, we pray,
to see ourselves in his story.

Help us, we pray,
to make his story ours.

In his name and in your love, we ask it. Amen.

Written by Richard Bott.

Gathering, Lent/Easter 2021, page 37.

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O God, we too welcome Jesus as he comes riding
into our hearts and lives. Help us to join in the
celebration, so that we may be uplifted and
strengthened to join in the events of the coming
week, where we will be asked for service and
sacrifice in Christ's name, to heal the hurts of a
bruised and broken world. Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord
Amen.

Written by Allan Warren.
Gathering, Lent/Easter 2021, page 38.
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Blessing

*Blessed Is the One
For Palm Sunday*

Blessed is the One
who comes to us
by the way of love
poured out with abandon.

Blessed is the One
who walks toward us
by the way of grace
that holds us fast.

Blessed is the One
who calls us to follow
in the way of blessing,
in the path of joy.

~ Jan Richardson

From *Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons*.

Accessed online 25 March 2021. © Jan Richardson. janrichardson.com.

Hymn – Hosana, Loud Hosanna

VU 123

Blessing

Blessing of Palms

This blessing
can be heard coming
from a long way off.

This blessing
is making
its steady way
up the road
toward you.

This blessing
blooms in the throats
of women,
springs from the hearts
of men,
tumbles out of the mouths
of children.

This blessing
is stitched into
the seams
of the cloaks
that line the road,
etched into
the branches
that trace the path,
echoes in
the breathing
of the willing colt,
the click
of the donkey's hoof
against the stones.

Something is rising
beneath this blessing.
Something will try
to drown it out.

But this blessing
cannot be turned back,
cannot be made
to still its voice,
cannot cease

Many people spread their cloaks on the road,
and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields.

Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,
“Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the
coming kingdom of our ancestor David!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

Then he entered Jerusalem
and went into the temple;
and when he had looked around at everything,
as it was already late,
he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 The stone that the builders rejected
(VU p. 837 Parts One, Three, and Four)

Refrain: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Part One (1-4)

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.' R

Part Three (19-24)

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 God's doing, marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that God has made,

let us rejoice and be glad in it! R

Part Four (25-29)

Save us, O God, we pray;

God, we pray, give us success.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God.

We bless you from the house of God.

God, our God, has given us light;

with palm branches in hand let us march to the altar.

You are my God, and I will thank you;

you are my God, and I will extol you. R

Sermon –

In the before times, was there a parade at stampede time here? Was there an annual Williams Lake Stampede Parade?

Yes? I thought so.

Would I be right if I guessed all of you have been to at least one of those annual parades? Probably more than one.

Yes? I thought so.

Maybe you were even in the parade one year. I'm sure I remember Andy telling me that one year he and his grandson rode in the parade. His grandson riding Andy's horse; Andy riding a horse he borrowed from a friend. How much fun would that have been? A parade to remember, I imagine. A family story for the ages, I imagine.

I imagine Linda was in the crowd that lined the parade route that year, anxious to see her grandson ride by. I imagine she waved at him like crazy.

I haven't been to the Williams Lake Stampede. One of these years – maybe not this year – but one of these years I hope I'll get to go.

I've been in the crowd on the roadside at a few parades – the PNE Parade and the Calgary Stampede Parade come to mind.

I've marched in a few parades over the years. Remembrance Day Parades in Vancouver; Battle of the Atlantic Parades in Halifax. One year in Ottawa it was my privilege to offer prayer at the National War Memorial on Korean Remembrance Day.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed colt. The disciples threw their cloaks over the colt's back. The crowd laid cloaks along the road, marking the route, and waved palm branches. A parade for a king – the crowds made it so. They hoped it was a parade for king.

The author of this gospel depicts Jesus as a long-awaited king. For Mark, the very title “Christ” denotes royalty. The Greek *christos* translates to the Hebrew *mashiach* which means “anointed one”. Mark leans toward the royal connotation in keeping with the relatively popular Second Temple Jewish hope, “whereby God was expected to send an anointed king in the last days to defeat God's enemies and restore God's people – even creation itself – to a state of everlasting peace.”

Given the history of Jerusalem as a royal city we can completely understand how the people, how some of the characters inside this week's story, “might experience Jesus' actions as a “triumphal” entry bringing him one step closer to establishing his throne in the ancient city of kings.” The disciples “already know [he's] the Messiah and have been anticipating a future of greatness and glory alongside their master.”er

By the time Jesus arrives in Jerusalem for Passover, bystanders are ready to shout “blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” and “hosanna!”

The tragic irony, though, is that Jesus is headed to a shameful execution – and he knows it. He's tried to tell the disciples. There were having none of it.

(Ira Brent Driggers. Commentary on Mark 11:1-11. WorkingPreacher.com. Accessed March 27, 2021.)

I wonder how many times you've laid your cloak along the route, or waved palms and paraded around the sanctuary joyfully singing one of the traditional Palm Sunday hymns?

Would that we could have done that this year. Or last year. Maybe next year in Jerusalem. Maybe next year in Williams Lake. Jesus flags like the one Linnea held, and palm fronds at the ready as we line the royal route waiting joyfully to wave and shout and greet him as he rides on in majesty before our very eyes. When he gets here, we can go with him to check out the temple and look around at everything before we go to Bethany with him and the twelve.

You know, last year as we approached Holy Week and Easter, we wondered how we could make it work with no in-person gatherings, no classic hymns, no waving palm branches or parading around the sanctuary, no communion celebrations. We had to find new ways to connect, new ways to tell the story, new ways to do big things in a small way.

We were only going to have to do that once, I thought. Maybe you thought so, too.

Well, no, as it turns out. Here we are again. Last year the Palm Sunday service was shared by email. This year the Palm Sunday service is on Zoom

Yes, I know and you know that Dr. Henry made concessions – but they were an Easter weekend truce, of sorts, an exceptional easing of restrictions for a brief period of time and as soon as the high days and holy days were done, we'd have to leave the sanctuary again. A total tease, it would have been.

Here we are on the cusp of Holy Week. If we only celebrate Palm Sunday and Easter Day, we miss the point of the week. It's not about chronology. It's about geography. In Williams Lake or in the Holy Land, in 2021 or the first Holy Week, it's about the geography. The personal, spiritual, emotional geography of a week in which Jesus is celebrated and welcomed as the messiah, angrily tears down the sellers and the buyers in front of the temple, is repeatedly challenged by the Temple authorities, is betrayed, arrested, abandoned, abused and killed, buried and appears, alive, to his closest companions. That's a full week that covers a lot of ground.

We need to travel that geography and see how it speaks to our own lives. Live that have their own ups and downs, joy and grief, confusion and hope. We might also see how the week is full of moments that contrast the behaviour of crowds with more personal, intimate moments. Embrace the story, not for its ancient images, but for how it speaks to us today about those daily moments we all encounter.

We might find, we might also see, that our relationship with God has Palm Sunday moments, Good Friday moments, and Holy Saturday moments. Our relationship with God might struggle through celebration, anger, learning, loneliness, death, even emptiness. But still there will always be an Easter.

Amen.

Anthem

Communion Hymn – *Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ* VU 468

The Lord's Supper *insert*

Hymn – *They Crucified My Lord* VU 141

The Life and Work of our Congregation

- **Thank you for your ongoing financial support.**

The invitation.

On that first Palm Sunday,
the disciples went into the village
to find what Jesus had asked for,
with only these words:
“The Lord needs them.”
May we respond today and always
with our gifts, our time, and our selves,
because the Lord still needs them.

Written by Wanda Winfield.

Gathering, Lent/Easter 2018, page 36.

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The prayer of dedication.

Generous God,
we come shouting “hosanna”
and waving palm branches.
We come with our offering –
of our time, our talents, and our treasures.
May our praise be true
and may our offering pass the test –
when followers are ridiculed
and when following is more costly
than we planned.
We pray for the strength to follow through
on what these offerings represent.
May we be found faithful in this time. Amen.

Written by Beth W. Johnson.

Gathering, Lent/Easter 2021, page 39.

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- **Book Study** – the Board invites you to join them in reading and studying *Thriving Churches: Urban and Rural Successes*. (Lorraine MacKenzie Shepherd. Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 2021.) The plan is to read the whole book through and then meet two twice for 90 minutes to discuss aspects of the book. (The group could decide to meet three times if it wanted to.) Books have been ordered and shipped from the United Church Resource Distribution Centre (UCRD) and available from the office when they arrive. Of important note, this is a Canadian book written by an United Church Minister with contributions from other UCC ministers all looking at United Churches across the country. Please let Nancy know if you’d like to participate in this book study. When the books arrive, we’ll decide on the timeline and when we’ll host discussions/conversations.
- **Good Friday service** – 10:00 am by Zoom this Friday
- **Healing Pathways** – The Healing Pathway practitioners of St. Andrew's Williams Lake are now gathering on Zoom on the 4th Tuesday of each month. The next session will be April 27. We will be meditating and offering healing sessions by distance to anyone who wishes to receive. To receive, contact Brenda by phone, 250-392-6428 or email, bjsmith_wl@yahoo.com.

- **Newsletter** – It is time to start work on a spring newsletter. Please send submissions or ideas to Heather at hawmack@yahoo.com before April 14. Thanks for your help in making this newsletter a great one!
- **Mail slot & drop box** – newly installed on the left-hand side front door!! The mail slot is white and double doored/flapped with weather and tamper proofing between the flaps. (It takes two hands to put the mail through.) On the inside of the church door the mail drops directly into a locked, metal box so the mail is contained and secure. Nothing will fall to the floor or into the door. Thanks to Ed and Roger for installing the mail slot, and Ed for installing the drop box.

Hymn – God Weeps

MV 78

Commissioning & Benediction

In one hand, we clutch the palms and cry “Hosanna!”
 In the other, we clutch the nails and cry “Crucify!”
 Go from here in the love that is constant.
 At our best, and at our worst, you keep us, Holy One.

**The Christ who stretches out wounded hands
 and walks on wounded feet goes with us now, and always.
 Amen.*

Written by Robin Wardlaw.
Gathering, Lent/Easter 2015, page 37.
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**Traditional Celtic prayer*

A Holy Week prayer from Sarah Bessey, shared in worship this morning:

God of donkeys and palm branches, of people who betray and people who hold fast, of holy weeks that bring us to the depths of suffering and the heights of resurrection, draw near to us.
 Disrupt us, God.

Disrupt all the ways we’ve adopted and adapted to the world’s priorities, powers, and principles. As the light disrupts the dark, disrupt us. We can hear your. new world breathing, about to be born. And we claim our spot in your kin-dom, God, right with the liars and the thieves, the betrayers and the silent ones, the faithful and the stalwart.

May the rocks never have to cry out on our watch, may our mouths be filled with joy and truth. We want to be a people who can hold space for both our hope and our grief, our disappointment and your disruptions.

We ask for eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand what it is your Spirit is saying to the Church in this moment, may we never miss an opportunity to disrupt with you.

Jesus, retell the whole story from the inside out. Retell us from the inside out.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God and Mother of us all. Amen.

(From the Palm Sunday essay for Field Notes subscribers - <https://sarahbessey.substack.com/p/palm-sunday>
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