

St. Andrew's United Church (Williams Lake)
April 18, 2021 – Third Sunday of Easter
(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

Hymn – Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying

VU 400

Call to Worship

The candle is lit;
the radiance of Christ shines on us;
we are gathered together knowing that
Christ is here among us.

Written by Fern Gibbard. Adapted by Nancy Colton.
Gathering, Lent/Easter 2015, page 39.
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One: In believing, in doubting,
we come to this service,

All: and God accepts us.

One: In wondering, in affirming,
we come to this service,

All: and God welcomes us.

One: As individuals, as a faith community,
we come to this service,

All: and God's Word speaks to us.

One: With rejoicing, with sorrow,
we come to this service,

**All: and the risen Christ is eternal hope for us,
as we worship and as we live.**

Written by David Sparks.

Gathering, Lent/Easter 2018, page 41.

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Opening Prayer

Creator,
we bring our doubts and our questions,
and you touch our unbelief,
you turn them into adventures.
Come now, O Spirit,
and create a moment of glory
where we can sense you among us
and the world can witness us
the good news that resurrection brings.
Amen.

Written by Peter Chynoweth.

Gathering, Lent/Easter 2021, page 44.

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Hymn – *Come, Let Us Sing of a Wonderful Love*

VU 574

Prayers of Confession

One: Skin and bone we are;
flesh draped over a heart that beats and breaks,
humans being who sometimes feel more like
humans doing...

**All: God, too often we have worshipped those
things that do no matter: celebrity, power,**

money, security, and our very lives.

One: May the Advocate intercede on our behalf
that you and the world might see our intention
to do justice and love kindness, and
walk humbly with our God. (Micah 6:8)
Amen.

Written by Michele Rowe. (Adapted by Nancy Colton.)
Gathering, Lent/Easter 2015, page 42.
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Words of Assurance

In the Divine, we live and move and have our being.
We are children of God; let us live into that truth.

Written by Michele Rowe.
Gathering, Lent/Easter 2015, page 42.
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Hymn – *I Am a Child of God*

MV 157

Scripture Reading

Luke 24:36-48 - Jesus Appears to His Disciples
(as told by Linnea Good)

While they were talking about this,
Jesus himself stood among them
and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

They were startled and terrified,
and thought that they were seeing a ghost.
He said to them, “Why are you frightened,
and why do doubts arise in your hearts?
Look at my hands and my feet;
see that it is I myself.
Touch me and see;
for a ghost does not have flesh and bones
as you see that I have.”

And when he had said this,
he showed them his hands and his feet.

While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering,
he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?”
They gave him a piece of broiled fish,
and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you
while I was still with you—
that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets,
and the psalms must be fulfilled.”

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures,
and he said to them, “Thus it is written,
that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day,
and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be
proclaimed in his name
to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
You are witnesses of these things.

Sermon –

Can you imagine? What would it have been like to be in that room? A follower, a friend, a disciple – you and the others gathered together, talking, still laying low after everything that had happened over the last few weeks, minding your own personal and collective business. Figuring out what’s left. Working their way to the realization, the reality, that’s what left is their work as witnesses.

“Peace be with you.” “Do you have food? Can I have a snack?”

Good thing Jesus stopped in. He reminded them who they were. Whose they were. He reminded them that what he told them when he was still with them is true, that everything that had been written in the prophets must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures – that the Messiah is to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. That we are witnesses of these things.

He reminds them and us of all that while he’s chowing down on broiled fish.

Obviously then, NOT a ghost. Ghosts don’t eat fish. Jesus – in the broken, wounded flesh – eats fish.

“And while, in their joy, they were disbelieving and still wondering....” So, Jesus brought them back down to earth with something real and everyday: fish.”

In the email that accompanied the video telling the story, Linnea Good talks about how it is she loves how Jesus eats with his disciples – and how this is proof that he is really real. Throughout the gospels, Jesus spends lots of time eating with his friends. Time spent at table with Jesus was – and is – gift and grace. Table fellowship is some of the best fellowship.

Imagine what it will be like when finally we can sit down and eat together in classic United Church style – at a potluck meal in MacKinnon Hall. I'm sure we'll meet Jesus there.

I told a story recently about my colleague and friend who had been asked by a young person if Jesus was zombie. The disciples may not have been familiar with zombies, but they sure knew a ghost when they saw one. According to Luke this morning, Jesus had to convince them he wasn't one.

When she shared her zombie story with me – and I shared it with you – she confessed that she didn't have an answer to the question, “how, then, is Jesus alive?” If we're looking for a physiological answer, she didn't have one, and I don't either. It's a miracle. I'll come back to that, but where my friend and I were going with that at the time was how Jesus is alive in each of us today. For all the moments of grief and brokenness, all the crucifixions large and small, all the moments of loneliness and heartache, there is always an Easter. The story is about the promise of new life.

That's lovely and warm. And true. I still think that's the main take-away, the big picture of the story. But why, then, doesn't Jesus just appear as a spiritual manifestation, if you like – or a bright light and a voice, like Paul experiences Jesus? Why do each of the post-Easter stories of Jesus emphasize the disciples seeing and touching Jesus? In the passage from Luke this morning, where Jesus has to convince them he's not a ghost, he tells them to touch the wounds and asks for a snack. Everyone knows ghosts don't eat. Only a human being would. Why is it so important that they see his face, touch his body, hold him close and share a meal with him? Why did they have to see him whole again?

Well, that's the first thing. He wasn't whole. He was wounded. He carries the marks of what happened, what he experienced. We all do. And he's changed by it, as we all are.

And that's another thing. The physicality of the resurrection reconnects us to the physicality of Jesus' birth – the story of the incarnation, “the Word made flesh,” Emmanuel which means God-with-us. Jesus is one of us. And that's crucial to

understanding how Jesus is alive in us today, because Jesus shows us how to be fully alive. When we hear Jesus say “love on another as I have loved you,” it's not an impossible task, or a bar set too high, it's the fulfilment of what's already in us. We are also created both in God's image and of the earth, divine and human. We are meant to embrace Jesus and hold him close for that very reason, wounds and all, not putting him on a pedestal to be worshipped at as distance as something unattainable.

Everyone who meets Jesus after the resurrection seems to need this physical contact. Thomas isn't the only one who doubts, we all do. And they wonder and are amazed and still can't explain it. Same for us. But wonder and doubt are part of the journey of faith. Which is why it's so important for us to hear this story, so far removed from it. To see Jesus, to know Jesus, to experience Jesus, to share Jesus, we need to look at ourselves and each other. That's where the love is, waiting to be brought back into life, waiting to be shared, waiting to bring new life to all of us. That's the miracle part. I don't know exactly how it works, but it does. Love is not ended by death. It brings new life.

We are witnesses to all these things. We are called to witness to all these things. As disciples of Jesus, and followers of the Way, that is our task, our mission.

May we step out and speak up, witnessing in faith.

Amen.

Anthem – *Red-Winged Blackbird* by David Francey.

Hymn – *God of the Sparrow*

VU 229

(In recognition and celebration of Earth Day, Thursday, April 22.)

Community Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Encircle us with love
as we journey into this day and this week.
Fill us to overflowing,
that wherever we may walk
your love might radiate from us
and warm the hearts of those
whose lives we touch.
Blessing them and blessing us.

John Birch.

Risen Christ:

You startled us when you came into our world.
You startled us when your love touched our hearts.
You startled us with your kindness and open heart.
You startled us when you rose from the dead.
Receive these, our gifts, we pray.
Startle us again by the good work these gifts make possible
that we may startle ourselves with our generosity
made possible by your love.

...prayers of thanksgiving and intercession – VU pp. 908-909 ...

And now, O God, we are one in prayer but bring our own thanks and concerns. If some need to say “help me”, or “save me”, or “hold me”, or “forgive me”, then let these be spoken now in the confidence of our hearts in a moment of quiet prayer.

God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as we have been taught,

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom 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 kingdom, the power, and the glory
forever and ever. **Amen.**

The Life and Work of our Congregation

Hymn – *Amazing Grace*

VU 266

Commissioning & Benediction

One: Do not doubt, but believe.

All: We have seen and experienced the risen Lord.

One: Let us greet one another now with love, peace, and grace, and celebrate

All: for this day, we affirm everyone.

One: Let us celebrate the power of holy love,

**All: for we are an Easter People.
Hallelujah! Alleluia!**

Written by Don Uhryniw. (Adapted by Nancy Colton.)
Gathering, Lent/Easter 2018, page 46.
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The God of all the ages, bless you.
The God of all places, bless you.
The God of all peoples, bless you.

The God of all you have been, are, and will be,
bless you and keep you,
this day and every day.
Amen, amen, and amen.

Written by Robin Wardlaw. (Adapted by Nancy Colton.)
Gathering, Lent/Easter 2012, page 41.
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