

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski

Second Sunday of Easter - April 24th, 2022

Words of Welcome

Trust seems hard to come by right now. Skepticism abounds. We all want proof. Rock solid proof. Into this comes Easter and its resurrection stories and we want proof. I can give you proof of resurrection, but maybe we can talk a little about trust when it comes to those experiences of others so long ago. Join me as I consider some of those resurrection accounts. We begin with a call to worship.

Call to Worship

In life, in death, and in life beyond death,

The Risen Christ is Lord.

In success and discouragement, in fear and in hope,

The Risen Christ is Lord.

Of the poor and broken, of the sinner and the sinned against,

The Risen Christ is Lord.

In Church and community, in our hearts and our homes,

The Risen Christ is Lord, and so we gather to worship in his name.

©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. Second Sunday of Easter. April 24th, 2022. Year C.

Hymn

Alleluia, Alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord

260

Refrain

*Alleluia, alleluia,
give thanks to the risen Lord;
alleluia, alleluia,
give praise to his name.*

1. Jesus is Lord of all the earth;
he is the King of creation:

Refrain

2. Spread the good news o'er all the earth; Jesus has died and has risen:

Refrain

3. We have been crucified with Christ; now we shall live forever:

Refrain

4. Come, let us praise the living God, joyfully sing to our Saviour:

Refrain

"Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord," words by Donald Fishel. Text: © 1973. International Liturgy Publications. All rights reserved. Annual License with podcasting OneLicense.net A-723877

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of yesterday, today, and tomorrow,
we rejoice in this new day you have made.

We praise you for the abundant life with which you bless us,
and for all the beauty that surrounds us as spring promises to take hold again.

We praise you for your Son Jesus,
and the power of new life promised in his resurrection.

We praise you for your Spirit at work in human history,
to restore and redeem our hope with that power of new life.

God of steadfast love, we worship you with the Spirit and the Son, and claim your gift of new life, even in the face of any doubt, danger, or need for affirmation within the world you love. All praise, honour and glory be yours, O God, now and evermore.

O God of might and mercy,

**in raising Jesus from the dead, you showed us your power
to defeat all that brings fear and sorrow to our lives.**

In his resurrection, Jesus promised to be with us everywhere and always.

Yet we confess we are sometimes uncertain about your promises.

We doubt the promise of resurrection for our own lives.

Upheaval and anxiety eat away at our peace.

**Forgive us when we struggle to trust your goodness
and your steadfast love for us.**

O God of Resurrection, breathe your Holy Spirit upon us now,
so that as your Word is read and preached,
we might hear, understand, and believe. Amen.

©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. Second Sunday of Easter. April 24th, 2022. Year C.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Hear and believe the good news of the Gospel.

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free from sin and sorrow.

In Jesus Christ, God offers us the gift of peace.

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts this day.

©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. Second Sunday of Easter. April 24th, 2022. Year C.

Scripture Reading John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'

²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' ²⁸ Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' ²⁹ Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. <http://nrsvbibles.org>

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Message Peace be with you

During these last weeks as we have watched the war in Ukraine through the screens of our devices and televisions, the scenes that stick with me are those of people huddled together hoping that they are in a place of relative safety. The fear is palatable. Whether it was under bridges in underground transportation hubs, or in factories, people were there, are there, out of fear. Their homes, their cities are not safe places. The fear of attack and death is very real. There is a reason millions of people have fled the country. Fear is in the air; you can taste it. Their president is doing everything at his disposal to protect and save the people, their homes, their country, but the devastation is real.

We feel kinship to those who are living in the Ukraine, but this scene has played itself out for decades in countries around the world. Fear of war, hunger, poverty, abuse, and neglect, are not new. It was not new in Jesus' time either. Scripture says, on that first day when Jesus had risen, "the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews." (v19) Fear was present. We are not told why they are afraid of the Jews, but let me suggest that it was not all Jews they were afraid of, only those who had the authority to do to them as was done to Jesus. And now they have no leader, no direction, no hope. They are in fear of the future and in fear of their lives.

Into this scene, into this place of fear, where the house is locked, "Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'" (v19) By this point of the day Mary Magdalene has been to the tomb as well as others to discover that Jesus is not there. It is not until a little later after the men are gone that Mary has her encounter with Jesus. She then goes and shares that she has seen Jesus. In fact, "Jesus said to her...go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary goes and announces to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord" and

she told them that Jesus had said these things to her, but here we are, later in the evening, and the disciples have not believed what they have either seen with their own eyes – the empty tomb – nor Mary’s account.

They have not trusted or remembered all that Jesus had spoken to them before his death. He shared with them on multiple occasions that he would die and in three days rise again. Yet Jesus words, his teaching on that, his promise, has not yet come to mind.

But now, in this locked up house, Jesus is present with them. He shows them the evidence that it really is him, not some aberration of him. “He showed them his hands and his side” once again saying “Peace be with you” but with a little more information or rather instruction, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And then the promised gift, a promise made prior to his death...Jesus “breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”

We also know that one disciples was not with them when all of this was happening and he has been given the dubious title of “doubting Thomas”. Yet, Thomas was no more doubting of the stories that the rest of the disciples told, then all of them were of Mary Magdalene when she gave her account of Jesus’ appearance to her in the garden. Everyone of us would want what the others had...to actually see Jesus. And that is not such a stretch. Who of us would believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead, even if we had been one of the disciples ourselves? Just as we understand dead to be dead, the end, the disciples did as well.

Now a week later after all the stories of resurrection encounters, as the men spoke and shared what had been seen and heard, Thomas insists that he will not believe unless he sees the mark of the nails in Jesus’ hands and puts his finger in the mark of the nails and his hand in Jesus’ side, he will not believe. We all want that kind of empirical, measurable proof of something that is so beyond our comprehension that we don’t even trust others, others we have walked with in life, trusted and lived with, known deeply as friends and family. Sometimes we just don’t trust.

As I write I think of all the deep distrust that has been experienced in these last couple of years, distrust of media, of scientists and medical professions, distrust of colleagues among each other, distrust in our government and even in our families. It is not hard to imagine and feel the distrust that the disciples had of Mary’s story and the distrust that Thomas had of those who he had spent the last three years with. Yet in all of this, Jesus met each one of these people where they needed him, where they were at.

Jesus met Mary at the tomb in her distress, he met the disciples as they hunkered down in a locked house, as they lived in fear and with fear. Then he came to Thomas and invites Thomas to do exactly as he had wanted. Once again, Jesus standing there in a place where the doors were shut, saying, “Peace be with you. Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side.’” (v22). Jesus meets Thomas’ need. Thing is, we are never told whether or not Thomas

actually goes that far. What we are told, is that Thomas recognized Jesus and in praise answered Jesus with, "My Lord and my God!"

And the writer of John's gospel gets that the rest of us will never have that opportunity to see Jesus in the flesh as those first disciples and many others did in the days following the resurrection. Still, we are asked to trust those who did, who lived their lives changed because of those encounters, because of the promises fulfilled in Jesus and in the gift of the Holy Spirit breathed on all believers.

In our lives and in our communities of faith, in our families and friendships, when we know longer trust what another has experienced or is experiencing, we close off opportunities for wonder, for being curious, for learning, for relationship. We may not agree, we may ask more questions, but ultimately the question remains, do we trust those who we love and who have walked with us in the world, with in our homes, in our work, in our worship?

When we take the time to listen for understanding, even if we don't get it or disagree, we are able to meet each other where we are at, and in love and trust find a way forward. As Christians we are called to nothing less. We also can trust that Jesus continues to meet us where we are at, whether it is in locked houses afraid of a virus, locked churches that are trying to serve God and community, or locked hearts, broken and bruised by those who said they loved us. Jesus is present, he steps in among us and with us and says, "Peace be with you."

As I write I find an ending to the message is not emerging, but maybe that is just it. Each of us has our own story, our own encounters with the risen Lord, our own lived experience of faith, trust, love, and betrayal. I can't write this ending for you. All that may be necessary is to say, Jesus is present, Christ has risen, Christ is among us in the power of the Holy Spirit, and Christ will meet you where you are.

Be attentive to the Spirit at work in, through, around, and with you. Trust those who have lived the faith since the beginning, written in the words of scripture and lived out even now by the people around you, and hear Jesus speak these words of assurance and promise, "Peace be with you."

Prayers of the People

We give thanks to you, O God, for you are good,
Your steadfast love endures forever.

We thank you, God, for the many ways you provide for our needs:
for air and water, for food and shelter, for work to do and rest to sustain us.
We pray for your creation, too often at risk because of the choices we've made.
Help us care for the earth and all its creatures and relationships.
Show us how to cherish the gifts you have given
and protect them for future generations.

We thank you, God, for family:

the families we were born or adopted into, the families we married into, and other families who welcomed us into their midst as friends and neighbours. We pray for those who have lost family members and relationships, and for any who know abuse and pain within the family circle.

God, we also thank you for friendship:
for friends who have supported us through months of pandemic restrictions and for those who bring us joy and wise counsel.
Help us extend the gift of friendship
to those who are experiencing isolation, loneliness or grief.

We thank you, God, for the peace and freedom we enjoy in Canada, and pray that the conflict over what these gifts mean will be soothed with deeper understanding among us all.
We pray for those who know neither freedom nor peace: those living under oppressive regimes or in conflict zones, and those who have fled their homelands, in search of safety.

We especially remember and hold up to you the war in Ukraine as people flee and pray for those who are trapped in areas that are not safe to leave, where food, water, and medical needs cannot be addressed.

Give us courage to stand up for people everywhere who cannot stand up for themselves, so that they too will know peace and freedom.

We thank you, God, for your Church, for our congregation and its leaders, and for all who volunteer time, talent and energy to the work we undertake in Jesus' name.

By your Spirit, guide us as we regroup after the months of pandemic and inspire us with new insight into mission and ministry.
We pray for other churches in our community and in our presbytery, and the sense of mission that guides each one into service.

Fill us with a deeper sense of unity so that we can model relationships that transcend differences in this divided world.

O God, thank you for the gift of your Son,
whose resurrection empowers us to look to the future with hope.
Thank you for the gift of your Spirit who draws us into unity with you and one another as together we offer the prayer Jesus taught us:

Lord's Prayer

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.

Invitation to the offering

In this season of Easter, we celebrate God's most precious gift to us in Christ's dying and rising. As we present our offering today, may we give with thankful hearts, trusting that God can do amazing things through the gifts we offer in Jesus' name.

©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. Second Sunday of Easter. April 24th, 2022. Year C.

As we are people from different churches and places following this service. I encourage each of you to present your offering to God this day to your church community.

If you consider St. Andrew's your church, regardless of where you live, would like to learn more about St. Andrew's, get involved in our ministry and work, or make a donation toward the life and ministry of St. Andrew's Presbyterian, in Thunder Bay visit our website at <http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> for more information.

Hymn

Joyful, joyful we adore you

410

1. Joyful, joyful we adore you,
God of glory, Lord of love.
Hearts unfold like flowers before you,
opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
drive the dark of doubt away;
giver of immortal gladness,
fill us with the light of day.
2. All your works with joy surround you;
earth and heaven reflect your rays;
stars and angels sing around you,
centre of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
flowery meadow, flashing sea,
chanting bird and flowing fountain,
join to praise you joyfully.
3. You are giving and forgiving,
ever blessing, ever blessed,
wellspring of the joy of living,
ocean depth of happy rest,
God Creator, Christ our Saviour,
all are yours who live in love.
Teach us how to love our neighbour;
Lift us to your joy above.
4. Morning stars, awake the chorus;
mortals, join with every part,
for what joy is set before us
as Christ's love joins heart to heart!
Ever singing, march we onward,
victors in the midst of strife;
joyful music leads us sunward,
in the triumph song of life

Words and music: public domain

Benediction

Go from here as witnesses of what you have seen and heard. Share God's love with those you meet. Bring hope to those who are in despair.
Live lives of gratitude and praise.

And may the love of God, the peace of Jesus Christ,
and the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit
be within you and among you until we meet again.

reWorship, <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/03/benediction-witnesses.html>