

Third Sunday of Easter - May 1st, 2022

## Words of Welcome

How are we to participate in the life and work of the church and with the world? What or maybe who sustains us to have the focus, energy, creativity to participate in the all aspects of our lives and that of others. If you are one to reflect on these types of question or even if you have never thought about it, may this time of worship be a time for considering these things. We begin with call to worship.

## Call to Worship

Children of God, do you love the God  
who hovered over the face of the deep and called the worlds into being?

**Yes, you know that we do.**

Then feed God's children.

Children of God, do you love the God  
who was revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ?

**Yes, you know that we do.**

Then take care of God's children.

Children of God, do you love the God  
who breathes new life into us even as we gather this day?

**Yes, you know that we do.**

Then feed God's children.

Based on John 21:15-19. Written for Evangelical United Church of Christ, 1998.  
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## Hymn

*Lead me Jesus; I will follow*

**637**

Lead me, Jesus; I will follow,  
Down the dusty pathways,  
All along the sea.  
Teach me, Jesus, to be loving:  
Your disciple I will be.

Descant:

Open my eyes that I may see;  
I will serve you: your disciple I will be.

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## Prayers of Adoration and Confession

God of the Risen Christ and the rising earth,  
we come before you this day giving thanks for all the wonder in your creation:  
for the tiny perfection revealed in a baby's fingers grasping ours,  
in each daffodil unzipping its jacket to greet the spring, and each rock face worn by  
wind and water, bearing its rugged beauty with your praise.  
These details lift our hearts to praise you, too.  
So let the details of the story the Risen Christ lift our hearts this day,

that we may greet a new week as an occasion to discover him in our midst, making all things new with the springtime of your Spirit.

**God of each and every life,  
week by week we lay our lives before you,  
acknowledging ways in which we fall short of your hope for us.  
Today we confess we sometimes find it hard to forgive ourselves.  
Things done long ago still haunt us.  
We hear your forgiveness proclaimed,  
yet your promise of a fresh start can ring hollow.  
Forgive us if we think we are the one sinner who cannot be forgiven.  
Forgive us when we cannot find the peace you offer.**

O God of sight and insight,  
Send your Holy Spirit to remove the scales from our eyes,  
so that we might see your truth and grasp your wisdom.  
Grant us fresh understanding of your Word and your will for our lives.

**Receive our heartfelt worship, O God, Creator, Christ and Spirit,  
ever Three and ever One, now and evermore. Amen.**

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## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

Friends in Christ, while it is true we have all fallen short of God's intentions, it is a greater truth that we are forgiven through God's love in Jesus Christ. To all who humbly seek the mercy of God, Jesus offers forgiveness and new life. So be at peace with God, with yourself, and with one another.

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## **Scripture Reading John 21:1-19**

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. <sup>2</sup>Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. <sup>3</sup>Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

<sup>4</sup>Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup>Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." <sup>6</sup>He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. <sup>7</sup>That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. <sup>8</sup>But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

<sup>9</sup>When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." <sup>11</sup>So

Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. <sup>12</sup>Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup>Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. <sup>14</sup>This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

<sup>15</sup>When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." <sup>16</sup>A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." <sup>17</sup>He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. <sup>18</sup>Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." <sup>19</sup>(He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

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

## Message Sent

What an interesting start to the story. Think about it. The disciples have recently gone through all kinds of experiences and emotions, from the highs of Palm Sunday to the intimate supper together with Jesus, the betrayal and death of Judas, and finally witnessed a trial in which their leader is sentenced to death by crucifixion. Jesus was crucified, buried, and then, the empty tomb. Since then, they have seen Jesus twice – resurrection appearances. How does one process all of that? Well for at least seven of the disciples it meant going back to do what they knew – fishing.

For those of you who fish, you well might think this was an appropriate thing to do. The water soothing, the task focused, while allowing time to think, to reflect, to just be. Yet it was a frustrating night as the men didn't catch a thing.

Think on times when you were faced with challenges that you didn't know how to work through or deal with. Emotions that were too overwhelming to just sit with. For many of us we turn to the things we know to busy ourselves. It is a coping mechanism and can be a healthy one at that, allowing us to process over time and get through things by doing what we already know and understand. It is often in doing things that we have revelations about our experiences and emotions. Both are needed, time to retreat and just get things done, and times to be still and reflect. Sometimes we are doing both in the same moment.

What is really the crux here is that the men are doing what they are doing, being who they are, getting through the day as best they can and Jesus meets them there,

physically and emotionally. Jesus has met them at the seashore where they are, comes to them with a gift of abundance in the catch of fish, and a meal to feed them in all aspects of their being. His presence, again, a life giving, hope-filled moment.

Jesus has a meal of fish and bread ready and still asks for their fish. Now if we are to consider what this might mean for us in our Christian walk, might it be that Jesus can provide but also asks us to participate in the sustaining work. Hold onto that thought for a moment as we consider the conversation between Peter and Jesus.

There has always been said to be a correlation between the three questions Jesus asks Peter here and the three times Peter denied knowing Jesus on the night of the trial. It is a moment of forgiveness for Peter, even if a hurtful reminder of his weakness and fear during that time. And you have to think that this has not been far from Peter's mind. This conversation with Jesus is about the denial and more. It is also a moment of commissioning of sending. Jesus is setting Peter up as a forgiven, if wounded leader. One who will be able to take on the work that is before him. If Peter truly loves Jesus, then he is to move on from what he is doing and do now what Jesus had been doing all along, feeding and tending to the needs of people.

Jesus refers to the people as sheep. Not as a derogatory term, but knowing that people like sheep need care, love, tending. One cannot read this part of John without recalling the words of Jesus from John chapter 10 where he refers to himself as the Good Shepherd, where he knows each sheep by name, he leads them, goes ahead of them and they follow because they know his voice.

Over the last few months Ken and I have had a young woman living with us that has lovingly been caring for a small flock of sheep. She has tended their wounds, fed them, nursed little lambs from dehydration and near death to life. She was just saying the other day that it is interesting how the sheep know her voice from all the others that may be around. They come to her. They trust her. She has tended to their physical well-being but that has also created a relationship that goes beyond the physical to the contentedness of the sheep. It also means mucking out the barn and the labour of stacking hay bails. Not all of the work is sweet, much of it is messy and dirty.

Now the relationship between Jesus and people is much more complex than that of Shepherd and sheep, but it is a starting place for understanding relationships of care, trust, and love. Jesus was calling Peter to that kind of relationship, one in which Jesus' love, care, compassion, and grace would be experienced through Peter. But remember Peter was not alone in that moment, there were six other disciples witnessing the conversation and it was the disciple Jesus loved who first recognized Jesus. Jesus met each of them where they were at physically, emotionally, even socially. Peter needed this conversation in order to go forward and all needed to hear it and see Jesus. All were being sent to do this same work.

Through their stories as witnessed to in the gospels, in Acts, and in the other letters written and passed through the generations to our time, known as the New Testament, we are given the same promise of restored relationship with God and each other through

Christ. Yet, we are not to stop there but, from whoever we are and wherever we are in a given moment in our life's journey, we are given the invitation to be abundantly sustained by Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit, through our relationships with one another and God, through our worship, through communion - the means in which we are fed physically and spiritually – and through tending to the needs of others both within the community of faith, and definitely through tending to the needs of others who are yet to know about the love God has for each individual.

Know that Jesus will meet you where you are at. Not one of us interacts with the world the same, each of us has our own story of hurt, betrayal, success, witness, and faith. It doesn't matter that you and I are different in that from each other, and that each of us is different from all others. Jesus will meet you where you are at, but he won't leave you there, at least not if you are willing to trust and go beyond yourself in faith to participate in God's work in the world.

To be a Christian means to be sent out into the world, to not be satisfied with things as they are, but to be willing to go beyond our comfort zones and even our own understanding, trusting in the sustaining and abundant love of God and bring the love of Christ to others. If you recall, Jesus provided fish and bread for breakfast, but also asked for the contribution of the fruits of their labours through bringing more fish to the fire for breakfast. We have something to offer in who we are to the story of Jesus, of God's work, in the world.

Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit upon the followers of Christ in the first resurrection story, and that promise of the Holy Spirit is there for all believers. We are loved, forgiven, and given power to love and forgive others through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. We do it as individuals and we are certainly called to it as the church. We are called from who we are and from where we are...for God so loved the world. Amen.

## **Prayers of the People**

Lord Jesus Christ,

We draw near to you in prayer this day, trusting that your love does change lives and your resurrection brings renewal and redemption into the world God loves.

As we lay before you the concerns on our hearts today, we pray that you will draw near to the people and situations we name and bring each one the gift that is needed:

We lay before you, Lord, the concerns we share from the news headlines and the many world situations where hope and change are desperately needed.

We lay before you, Lord, those who are in hospital or care and all those who struggle with illness, pain or health burdens of any sort; and we remember those facing grief and loss, bearing burdens of sorrow and worry.

We lay before you, Lord, families under stress, relationships that are strained, friends and neighbours in need of reconciliation, and we pray for the healing of divisions in our country.

We lay before you, Lord, the earth itself, struggling in so many places to maintain its fruitfulness,  
and we pray for all the vulnerable creatures and communities who are finding it harder and harder to live on land, sea or sky.

Lord Jesus,  
we believe that you hear our prayers and will be faithful to our requests and concerns.  
Use us in every opportunity that presents itself to serve you  
by serving our neighbours near and far.  
And so we pray together the words you gave us:

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## 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

Our lives overflow with God's blessings in Christ and in creation. With gratitude for all that we have received, let us present our offering to God, trusting that God can do a new thing with our gifts – and with our lives!

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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

*Will you come and follow me*

**634**

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| 1. Will you come and follow me<br>if I but call your name?<br>Will you go where you don't know<br>and never be the same?<br>Will you let my love be shown;<br>will you let me name be known:<br>will you let my life be grown<br>in you and you in me? | 2. Will you leave yourself behind<br>if I but call your name?<br>Will you care for cruel and kind<br>and never be the same?<br>Will you risk the hostile stare<br>should your life attract or scare?<br>Will you let me answer prayer<br>in you and you in me? |
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3. Will you let the blinded see  
if I but call your name?  
Will you set the prisoners free  
and never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean,  
and do such as this unseen,  
and admit to what I mean  
in you and you in me?

4. Will you love the “you” you hide  
if I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside  
and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you’ve found  
to reshape the world around,  
through my sight and touch and sound  
in you and you in me?

5. Lord, your summons echoes true  
when you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you  
and never be the same.  
In your company I’ll go  
where your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I’ll move and live and grow  
in you and you in me.

*“Will you come and follow me,”* Words by Iona Community  
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## **Benediction**

As you go out into the world,  
seek the presence of the Risen Christ in each other and in all of Creation.  
May God give you joyful courage to follow the command of Jesus:  
“Feed my lambs.” “Tend my sheep.” “Feed my sheep.”

~ from *Feed My Lambs*, written by Rev. Quentin Chin. Posted on the **United Church of Christ** website. <http://uccfiles.com/pdf/FeedmySheepEaster3April14.pdf>