

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay**  
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter – April 23, 2023

## Call to Worship

We have come from many places, following different roads.

**We come hungering for greater understanding.**

We have come to hear the wisdom of Scripture.

**We come seeking companions in the faith.**

We have come to discover the One revealed in the breaking of the bread.

**We come to grow as disciples of Christ.**

Come, let us worship God, made known in Christ Jesus.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 3rd Sunday of Easter. April 23, 2023. Year A.

Though the world has gone on as if Easter is over, we as Christians continue to celebrate the Easter Season. In so doing we sing...

## Hymn

*All my hope on God is founded*

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1. All my hopes on God is founded  
who does still my trust renew;  
through all change and chance God guides me,  
only good and only true.  
Love unknown, God's alone,  
calls my heart to be God's own.
2. Human pride and earthly glory,  
sword and crown, betray all trust;  
what our care and toil establish,  
tower and temple, fall to dust,  
but God's power, hour by hour,  
is my temple and my tower.
3. God's great goodness reigns eternal,  
deep in wisdom, passing thought;  
light and life are all God's splendor  
bringing beauty out of naught.  
Evermore from God's store  
newborn worlds rise and adore.
4. Daily does Almighty Giver  
bounteous gifts on us bestow,  
God's desire our soul delighting,  
pleasure leading where we go.  
Love will stand at God's hand;  
joy will wait on God's command.
5. Still from earth to God eternal  
sacrifice of praise be done,  
high above all praises praising  
for the gift of Christ, the Son.  
Hear Christ call one and all:  
you that follow shall not fall.

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As we come together in this time of worship, we acknowledge that it is God who has invited us to be together spending time in prayer, singing, and learning. Let us pray.

## Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Loving God,  
we gather in your Son's name this day, united by your Spirit to your followers throughout all time and space. It is amazing to remember that the stories we hear about you today have transformed so many other lives for so many centuries. It is amazing to consider how lives not so very different from our own carried your love from one generation to another, from one church to another, from one part of the world to another. As we join together in worship, open our eyes to new opportunities to express our love for you, and share your love in the lives we touch; for we are your people and we praise God in your holy name.

**Week by week we open our lives before you, acknowledging ways we sometimes lose track of you. We are driven and feel busy so we let other things come before you in our lives. Changes upend us and we don't know where to turn. Forgive us when we forget that you are with us day by day. Renew us in your love, we pray.**

Living God, you speak to us in sacred story, through friendship and conversation, in bread broken and wine poured out. Send us your Holy Spirit as the Scriptures are read. May our hearts burn within us as we encounter your truth, through Christ, our Risen Lord. Amen

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## Assurance of Forgiveness

On the Emmaus road, Jesus met friends who were discouraged and distracted by his death. Yet when he spoke God's word to them, their hearts burned within them. Hear God's word of forgiveness today. May the fire of God's love warm your hearts with God's promise of peace and new life.

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## Scripture Reading Luke 24:13–35

<sup>13</sup>Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup>and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup>While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, <sup>16</sup>but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup>And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. <sup>18</sup>Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" <sup>19</sup>He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, <sup>20</sup>and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. <sup>21</sup>But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. <sup>22</sup>Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, <sup>23</sup>and when they did not find his body there, they came back and

told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. <sup>24</sup>Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.” <sup>25</sup>Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! <sup>26</sup>Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” <sup>27</sup>Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

<sup>28</sup>As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. <sup>29</sup>But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. <sup>30</sup>When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup>Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup>They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” <sup>33</sup>That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. <sup>34</sup>They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” <sup>35</sup>Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

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## **Message** Hearts burning within us

I have had it happen numerous times in the last several months. People don't know who I am. Between the long grey hair and a major weight loss, people have not known it was me until I spoke or even told them it was me. I have had it with others as well, particularly when I haven't seen someone for a very long time. There is something familiar about them, but I can't place why or how I know them.

We don't know why Cleopas and his companion did not recognize Jesus right away. We are only told that “their eyes were kept from recognizing him.” (v17). It may have been that his resurrection body was different from what they had experienced of him before his death. We are not given the details. What we do know is that Jesus came alongside them at a time when their grief was deep. They were confused, heartbroken, and despairing because that is what grief is like. It is not simple or straightforward. Grief is filled with questions, what ifs and if only thoughts. Grief spirals our emotions to depths that we didn't know we could experience.

Grief is also filled with stories and emotions from anger to hope, tears to laughter. It doesn't make sense. It goes round and round like the stories that describe the person or situation being grieved and includes stories of loss, heartbreak and loneliness. It is an invitation to the sharing of stories that the stranger, who we know as Jesus, asks to hear and then shares with the traveling companions.

Story telling is how we get to know one another, it is how we process our experiences. Just this past weekend I said to a friend and colleague, that I am not a good story teller and she responded that in her experience how I share of myself is always in stories. In this scripture, there is a lot of story telling, lots of discussion going on. We are told that two of the people who had been a part of the goings on in Jerusalem over the last days with Jesus in the week of his death are now walking the road to Emmaus “and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but [as was noted] their eyes were kept from recognizing him.” (vv13-16) It is while they are talking and discussing that Jesus enters into the conversation asking “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” (v17)

Jesus meets them where they are, on the road on the way out of town. As old westerns movies often seemed to reference, they were getting out of Dodge. Even though they had heard from women and others that Jesus was not in the tomb and that Jesus was alive, it had not been enough. They were on their way back to what they knew, to what was or felt safe and familiar. They were sad and trying to make sense of it all...Jesus’ life, their hope, the horrible death, and now these stories of Jesus alive. And Jesus meets them there and listens to their story. He hears, feels, sees, and learns their story.

It is only after their time of sharing that Jesus speaks with them about what they have failed to believe, failed to understand, and tells them the old stories of “Moses and all the prophets as he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.” (v27) Remember, they have yet to recognize him and, as the hour is getting late, Jesus “walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly [to stay with them] because it was almost evening and the day now nearly over. So he went in to stay with them.” (vv28-29)

Jesus did not force himself on them. He gave them a choice. He went ahead and would have kept going but he was invited to stay. It was in the home, over an ordinary meal, that “When Jesus was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him.”

Sharing of stories, sharing of a journey, sharing company with one another, and sharing of a meal. These are ways we join together. It is the story of Christian community. It is the story of relationship. It is how we are in or come to be in relationship with one another and with God. We gather, we come alongside each other, we share meals, both ordinary and extraordinary, in the potluck meals after worship or over our tables in our homes, and over the table that is set every time we have a service of communion.

We share in stories of our lives and each time we gather in worship, study, or discussion over a coffee we are able share in the stories of faith. When we hear the stories of Jesus when gathered together, we can help each other makes sense of things. It is through scripture that Jesus can help us make sense of things, bring understanding as well as hope when we despair.

But we are not rushed. Jesus comes alongside us wherever we are in our journey. We are given the choice to invite Jesus to continue with us or for him to go on without us. Maybe to join us again later. Maybe to give us time to make sense of where we are now. Sometimes we invite Jesus to stay with us even when we cannot come to grips with where life has taken us and what stories are unfolding.

Jesus is patient.

Yet, I invite you to see where your eyes might be opened and you might recognize Jesus. For the two on the road and after Jesus disappeared “They said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’” (v32) Have you ever experienced Jesus in a way that you felt as if your heart was burning within you? Maybe you experience Jesus in a different part of your body. Some people refer to a gut feeling or somehow “knowing” that something or someone had impacted their lives. A head knowledge.

I encourage you to watch for, listen for, or even feel the presence of Jesus in your life. It may come through a conversation with others. It may be as you watch the snow fall or the snow melt. It may be a walk, a run, in the music you play or the art you create. It may be in times of meditation or reading of scripture, poetry, or story. It might be in the closeness of a relationship or a person. It could be the very presence of the Holy that you experience. It may be in worship as you say a prayer, join with others in song, or listen to a message.

I assure you that Jesus is present. He is always near through the work and power of the Holy Spirit given to us as a gift from God. It may take practice to sense Jesus present, to have your heart burn within, to know the hope that comes from despair and to have the stories of our lives and that of scripture inform and take us along on the journey of faith, hope, and promise.

There is one more thing though. The traveling companions did not keep their experience to themselves. They shared it. Actually, all of the disciples of Jesus shared their stories with those they loved and those they came to know. They did not understand perfectly everything about their experience. It took time for them to make sense of Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Most things do take time to process. Still, they lived what they knew. They gathered to be together as community, as friends, as companions. They gathered in community and in households. They shared stories and insights. They shared their lives.

They took bread, broke it and blessed it, then gave it to others, just as Jesus had told them to do. They did it in worship and they did it around the tables of those they encountered. They shared food, stories, and life. It is not so far from what we do everyday. They did it with the knowledge that Jesus was present. We get to do that still today.

We get to live our lives knowing that wherever we are at on our life's journey, Jesus is with us, walking alongside, sharing his life with us, giving us hope and new life as we are ready to take hold of it.

May you become aware of Jesus present with you in whatever way Jesus comes. Jesus will be present to you in ways that you can recognize, and one day, maybe that day has already happened, you experience his presence regularly. As you recognize Jesus with you, may your heart be burning warmly and with power within because you know Jesus loves you, is present with you, and is not going anywhere. He is with you.

I speak to you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **Prayers of the People**

God our Maker,

You have walked the Emmaus Road with your faithful people in many generations, people facing challenge and uncertainty, people seeking your purpose and promise.

Thank you for your faithfulness to us in all situations.

Walk with us and with those for whom we pray this day, that your grace and mercy may sustain our faith and hope.

We pray for children and young people who must think about the future in these uncertain times.

Give them hope rooted in the knowledge that their lives matter to you.

Show them how to make a difference in the world, whatever threats and challenges they face as they grow.

We pray for those for whom age or experience, illness or disability create barriers to full participation in your world.

Give each one a sense of dignity and purpose.

Show them where their gifts are needed and how much they matter to you.

We pray for communities challenged by forces beyond their control: economic uncertainty, environmental stress, natural disaster, political strife.

Give courage to those facing these crises day by day, and wisdom to those who lead others through them,

so that wellbeing may be restored and hope for the future prevail.

We pray for our congregation, for our life together and our future in mission. That future feels so challenging.

It is hard to read the signs of our times and respond wisely.

Sustain our fellowship and give us courage to take new paths, so that you will find us faithful on our journey into that future.

We pray for the wellbeing of those lives linked to ours who bring us both joy and heartache

because they matter so much to us and to you:

God our Maker, hear our prayers, spoken and unspoken,  
and use us in ways we may not yet even imagine to respond to others  
with the love and mercy we see in Jesus Christ who taught us to pray together:

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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 blessing and goodness in Christ and in creation.  
Out of the bounty of our lives, we offer God our gifts with overflowing gratitude.

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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>

## Hymn

*Come to us, beloved Stranger*

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1. Come to us, beloved Stranger, as you came that Easter day.  
Walk with us to our Emmaus, for we need you still today.  
Come to us when we are broken, when our dearest hopes are lost,  
speak to us the prophet's message you fulfilled upon the cross  
Stay with us and give us blessing, that our hopes again may rise.  
Offer us your broken body; open our unseeing eyes.  
Come to us, God's love embodied; touch our hearts with burning flame.  
Risen Christ, once dead, now living, come to us through joy, through pain.
2. We would never fail to see you as you walk with us each day.  
As a friend and not a stranger you would join us on our way.  
Help us trust that through your mercy we can doubt and fear transcend,  
and to others be a blessing. Keep us faithful till life's end!

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## Benediction

Now go, facing the road ahead, confident the Risen Christ goes with you.  
And may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,  
that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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