

Call to Worship

Just after Jesus had been raised up into new life

he appeared to the disciples, saying:

“Peace be with you!”

Whether we are disciples like Peter or like Thomas,

Jesus still seeks all who hear and believe the Good News.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.

So we gather to worship the Lord our God,

who brings us to new life in Jesus Christ.

[April 7, 2024 - Center for Faith and Giving](#)

Hymn

Lord, the light of your love is shining

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1. Lord, the light of your love is shining
in the midst of the darkness, shining;
Jesus, Light of the World, shine upon us.
Set us free by the truth you now bring us.
Shine on me; shine on me.

Refrain

*Shine, Jesus, shine;
fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow;
flood the nations with grace and mercy;
send forth your word, Lord, and let there be light!*

2. Lord, I come to your awesome presence,
from the shadows into your radiance;
by your blood I may enter your brightness.
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness.
Shine on me; shine on me.

Refrain

3. As we gaze on your kingly brightness,
so our faces display your likeness,
ever changing from glory to glory;
mirrored here may our lives tell your story.
Shine on me; shine on me.

Refrain

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Prayers of Adoration and Confession

God of new life,
we come to you, rejoicing in the mystery of the Risen Christ, present among us always, even when we least expect him. We marvel at your constant love, your victory over death, and your resurrecting hope which embraces us in every circumstance. Trusting in these gifts, we seek to live as Easter people in every time and place. Fill us with the gift of your Holy Spirit in this time of worship, and grant us your peace through Christ, our Risen Saviour.

Merciful God,

we confess our trust in you can weaken, and we become anxious about many things. We talk about love, but we fear those who differ from us. We cling to our personal agendas, and neglect your call to serve others, especially when that service costs us something.

Forgive us.

Through the power of your Holy Spirit, rekindle our passion for you, so we can witness to your love in all we do. Amen.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 2nd Sunday of Easter. April 7th, 2024. Year B.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Hear the words of the risen Christ: Peace be with you.
Receive the peace and forgiveness of Christ,
and share that peace with one another this day and every day. Amen.

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Scripture Readings

❖ 1 John 1:1-2:2

¹We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—²this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—³we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. ⁵This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; ⁷but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. ²My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate

with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;² and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

❖ John 20:19-31

¹⁹ 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.' ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If 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.

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Message These are written

Prove it! That might be a response to anything you have a difficult time believing. It is what is needed in a court room to be sure that lives that are being held in the balance have a fair and correct verdict. It is part of the scientific community's work, to prove or disprove theories. We want it in our relationships, we want proof that our partner loves us, to prove that love is more than words. In the work place we want proof that our work is valuable by getting feedback or even a promotion. That desire for proof starts at a young age. Maybe it is because children so often see adults model the desire for proof.

Still, we do much by faith. We love our children because they are a gift to us, yet even then we talk about bonding, and if mother and child or father and child do not bond it is difficult. Bonding is proof of the relationship.

So it is no wonder that people question those of us who are followers of Jesus. In term of Easter people want proof of the resurrection. Problem is, we can't give it to them, at

least not in physical form. We are unable to do that for ourselves. What we do have are the written accounts of the people who came face to face with Jesus after he died and after the news that Jesus was no longer to be found in the tomb.

There are multiple resurrection stories in the gospels. There is the one with the women who saw and touched Jesus on their way back to tell the disciples of their experience at the tomb. There were the two men who were walking back to the village of Emmaus, picked up a stranger, invited him to have dinner and spend the night only to realize that it was Jesus who had been with them the whole time. In our scripture today from the Gospel of John we hear of Jesus appearing to the disciples in the place where they were, and then coming back a week later to show himself to Thomas who deeply desired to have the experience of the risen Jesus that everyone else seemed to be having.

In the writing from 1 John, at a time much later, when communities of Jesus' followers had been formed and were continuing to find meaning and purpose in their experience of Jesus, the writer says, ¹"We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— ²this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— ³we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

That word of life, the life they are speaking about is Jesus. The words of the all the gospels and the writings of the New Testament are the experiences of those who encountered Jesus in their lives. Some are eyewitness accounts. As with anytime people are telling their story, details can vary, not because they are incorrect, but because the story is told from a certain perspective and for a certain audience. But these things are written for us.

John 20:30-31 states, ³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But 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." These are written.

You will note that the verse does not say, now Jesus did many other miracles, it says he did many other signs in the presence of his disciples. Jesus lived in a way that his living, his presence, the signs he pointed to, the resurrection experiences, were enough to convince people who had been with him for the three years of his earthly ministry to continue to live out their faith in Jesus even when it meant hardship. This hardship included expulsion from their synagogues, the scrutiny of others, and living with some amount of fear from authorities because of their belief that Jesus was the risen Lord.

We often forget what believing in Jesus cost his disciples, not just the eleven that were left, but all those who came to believe in Jesus as Lord. It still costs, but the cost is worth it because to believe in Jesus is to believe in a way of life that is transforming. It is why

mission statement of St. Andrew's says, responding, restoring, rejoicing. Our belief is in lives changed because this man Jesus walked the earth, but not only that, Jesus died and rose again, because, not only was Jesus fully human, but he was fully God.

The proof of lives transformed is when we can see and admit to our sinfulness, not so that we blame ourselves and others and/or feel miserable about ourselves, but so that we can be restored to the people of God we are called to be. To be people who can experience the fullness of God's love and the presence of God in Jesus as well as the Holy Spirit at work in our lives. This is done in community. This is the "why" of the church. It is a place to become more who we are called to be. To be healed, loved, challenged, and restored. It is a place where we are each called to respond to the invitation of God to be in community and to reach out to others through our community of faith. In the process of joining together in community we rejoice with one another and with those we encounter as they too are exposed to and maybe even touched by the gospel of grace that is offered.

The things that have been written about Jesus are there to teach us, to tell us the story of Jesus and those who were closest to him, and these things are written to sustain us. And now we are the witnesses of the faith to those who have never encountered the living Lord.

But how can anyone know of this way of life, this grace, this transforming experience if we never speak of it? We have been given the words of scripture, but there are so many people who have never even seen a bible let alone broke open the pages. It may be their encounter with you that becomes their first invitation to a transformed life, to a life they could not have imagined. You don't have to have all the answers, but don't hesitate to be a witness through your words and action so that people you encounter know that there is a God who loves them so much that it is beyond their imagining. And it is also okay if that love is still beyond your imagining. Continue to be in community knowing that faith deepens and matures over time.

We cannot cover all that could be said about these things that are written in one short message at a worship service. It takes study, prayer, and conversation. Yet we can begin with these things that are written and then add to them our own lived experience of the risen Lord no matter how small or how grand those experiences may be. That lived experience might come through nature, through another person, or from a prompting of the Holy Spirit at work in your life. Watch for it, listen for it, wait for it. Easter is here, Jesus is risen from the grave, and Jesus is present and as real in our lives now as he was to those first witness who wrote these things so that our joy may be complete and that through believing we may have life in Jesus' name.

Prayers of the People

Thank you, loving God, for your renewing presence in our lives,
and for the many ways you make yourself known to us:
in words spoken in peace,

in actions that embody love,
in creation that awakens wonder within us,
and in worship that inspires faith and understanding.
With memories of the grace you have shown us,
and with confidence in you will yet show us more,
we pray that all people will come to know the life-giving joy we find in Christ.

We pray for those who are feeling fearful, worried, or overwhelmed,
in these days of economic pressure and uncertainty.

We pray for those who face violence and unrest each day,
in countries around the world
and in our own community.

We pray for our national, provincial, and municipal leaders
as they seek solutions to the challenges in our common life.
Give them wisdom and compassion.

We pray for our congregation, for churches in our community,
and for Christians around the world,
especially those facing persecution and danger.

We pray for our neighbours,
especially those struggling with rising costs and scarce housing,
and those who know rejection and discrimination.

We pray for those who are ill, in pain or in grief.
We remember before you, silently or aloud, those on our hearts today:

Bring them comfort and strength,
Lord Jesus,

Reveal to all your risen presence.

God our Maker, hear our prayers,
and use us in ways we may not yet even imagine
to respond to those around us with the love we see in Jesus Christ.

With hopeful hearts we offer the prayer that he taught 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

In this season of Easter, we celebrate God's precious gift to us in Christ's dying and rising. As we present our gifts to God, may our generosity reflect God's goodness to us and the hope we have found in Christ Jesus.

We have gathered our gifts together as we entered for worship and now present them as an offering of gratitude and praise.

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Should you wish to support this ministry and/or 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

Now let the vault of heaven resound

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1. Now let the vault of heaven resound
in praise of love that doth abound,
Christ hath triumphed, hallelujah!
sing, choirs of angels, loud and clear,
repeat their song of glory here,
Christ hath triumphed, Christ hath triumphed!
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!
2. Eternal is the gift he brings;
wherefore our heart with rapture sings,
'Christ hath triumphed, Jesus liveth!'
now doth he come and give us life;
now doth his presence still all strife
through his triumph; Jesus reigneth!
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!
3. Oh fill us, Lord, with dauntless love;
set heart and will on things above,
that we conquer through thy triumph;
grant grace sufficient for life's day,
that by our life we ever say,
'Christ hath triumphed, and he liveth!'
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!
4. Adoring praises now we bring,
and with the heavenly blessed sing,
'Christ hath triumphed, hallelujah!'
Be to the Father and our Lord,
to Spirit blest, most holy God,
thine the glory never ending!
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

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Benediction

Go in faith, with the peace of Christ within you,
to witness to his kindness in the world.
And may God's resurrecting love open the future for you,
empowered by the Spirit,
and embraced by the presence of Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord.

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