

3rd Sunday of Easter – April 19, 2026

Call to Worship

We need your presence on the long road, Lord.

**The road between fear and hope,
the road between the place where all is lost
and the place of resurrection.**

Like the disciples walking the road to Emmaus,
we are in need of your company!

**Jesus, stand among us, in your risen power,
let this time of worship, be a hallowed hour.**

~ written by Carol Penner, and posted on *Leading in Worship*. <http://carolpenner.typepad.com/>

Hymn

Jesus, stand among us

452

1. Jesus, stand among us in your risen power;
let this time of worship be a hallowed hour.
2. Breathe the Holy Spirit into every heart;
bid the fears and sorrows from each soul depart.
3. Thus with quickened footsteps we pursue our way,
watching for the dawning of eternal day.

"Jesus, stand among us." Words by William Pennefather. Public domain.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Loving God,

you are the light of the hearts that love you the life of the souls that serve you
the inspiration of those who seek you:

you are infinite, eternal and unchanging, filled with love and compassion,
abundant in grace and truth.

To turn from you is to fall and to turn towards you is to rise up:

Your works everywhere praise you and your glory and truth are revealed in Jesus
Christ, and so we praise you as Creator, Christ and Spirit.

Loving God,

**we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed;
by what we have done and left undone.**

**We have not loved you with our whole heart, body, mind and soul
and we have not loved our neighbours as we love ourselves.**

**In your mercy, forgive what we have been, amend what we are and
direct who we shall be, in Jesus' name we pray, Amen.**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 3rd Sunday of Easter. April 19, 2026. Year A.

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. Amen.

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Scripture Reading Luke 24:13-35

The Walk to Emmaus

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ 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?" ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ 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. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ 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. ²⁴ 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." ²⁵ Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. ³² 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?" ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, "The Lord has

risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!”³⁵ 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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Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. **Thanks be to God.**

Message Recognition

Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples.

If you have been around the church for some time, you have heard those words spoken in the context of taking communion. Each time the communion table is readied, the minister picks up the bread, and says these words... Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples. It is a remembrance of Jesus words and actions as he shared a meal with the disciples on the night before the terrible events of the crucifixion. It was a meal of instruction, remembrance, and community.

Communion, the Lord’s Supper, the Eucharist, all names for this same participation in tasting the bread and wine or juice, is a celebration of God’s grace. It nourishes our faith. It sustains us. It is a gift. We call it a sacrament because, as Jesus shared the meal with his closest friends, we read in the Gospel of Luke the instructions to do this in remembrance of Jesus. (Luke 22:19)

The reason for sharing about the communion meal is because it is central to the story recounted in our Gospel reading today of the what is known as the Walk or Road to Emmaus. This story begins, “Now on that same day...” That same day being the day of resurrection. We may be two weeks out from Easter. Our lives feel like they have moved on from that Easter story and all the things we do to celebrate. The chocolate is either devoured or pretty much gone, the lilies may still have a bloom or two, the stores have moved on to getting the summer items out on the shelves in anticipation of the next season, but the Biblical story of Easter has not passed. On that same day...

Now on that same day two of them, two of those who had been in Jerusalem during all of the horror of the last few days, two followers of Jesus, were on their way from Jerusalem to Emmas. Presumably where they lived. They were downcast, sad. Imagine yourself in their situation. The one that they had hoped would change everything had been sent to his death in the most excruciating and horrific way possible at the time. The Romans hung people on crosses in public places as a warning to anyone who might consider crossing them. Jesus had been a threat to the status quo, especially for the Jewish temple authorities, and for Rome, if they could quash any instability before it became a problem, they were going to do so.

Jesus had become a problem and so he was dealt with. With his death any hope for change, for a new beginning of power over oppression had been lost. Except there had been some news that the tomb was empty. In the Gospel of Luke, the women who had gone to the tomb did not find the body but had seen two men in dazzling white who told

them that Jesus had risen from the dead, recounting the words that Jesus had told followers about how he would die and then on the third day rise again.

The women ran back to the disciples to tell them everything and Peter took off to check it out, but as of yet it still seemed all too surreal, too unreal. The grief outweighed possibility and hope. The two men, in their walk to Emmaus even say, “We had hoped...We had hoped that Jesus was the one to redeem Israel.”¹

But all hope was lost at this point. Heartbroken, defeated, and without hope, they head to Emmaus discussing all that had happened. Then they find themselves with a traveling companion. As the gospels were written after the fact, not as an in the moment play by play, we, the readers, are given the perspective by the writer of ones looking on the scene. We get to know what is going on but the actors in the scenario are oblivious. The person who has come alongside is Jesus, we know that, the writer knows that, but the two men are kept from recognizing Jesus in that moment.

This has been a theme in Jesus’ resurrection appearances in the other gospels as well. For an unknown to us reason, Jesus is not at first recognizable to everyone he encounters. It is like something needs to happen for people to be able to open their hearts, minds, and eyes to who is with them. In this case it is the two men on the seven-mile walk. They cannot believe that someone doesn’t actually know what had gone on in Jerusalem over the last few days. So they share with him the story.

This guy seems to know a thing or two about scripture and says to them what they should have known already, or at least should have been able to see for themselves about what the prophets had declared and that it was necessary that the Messiah, whom they had believed Jesus to be, well that the Messiah had to suffer these things and then enter into his glory.

That might seem all well and good. Maybe they should have known, but I have yet to encounter anyone who in their grief has clarity about much of anything. It is always a process to get through grief. It is only over time that one can recall events or begins to put two and two together. One could hardly have expected anyone who had been close to Jesus to have their heads on straight. Grief does not work that way.

However, the two do what people did in that time where hospitality to a stranger was important. It wasn’t like people had much money or that there was a place wherever you needed it to bed down for the night. So, they invited the stranger to stay with them. And this is where things get really interesting. Usually if you are hosting someone for a meal you would prepare the meal and share it. In this case as, who we know to be Jesus, but they haven’t figured that out yet, as he sits with them at the table, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

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Where have we heard those words before? Where have they heard those words before? Those words bring everything into focus. It is in those words that they recognize Jesus and then he vanishes from their sight.

Now I am not here to explain away mysteries. I cannot tell you why they and others who experienced Jesus' resurrection body could not at first see that it was Jesus they were looking at, but each time something happens so that they do see Jesus.

In the Gospel of John, Mary Magdalene did not recognize Jesus until he said her name. (John 20: 14-16). Also in John, Jesus comes to the disciples behind locked doors and it is like they do not know it is Jesus until he showed them his hands and his side. (John 20:20). And now, it is in the breaking of the bread that Jesus is revealed to them, that they recognize him.

What does seem to be a pattern is that Jesus is revealed to them when the relationship is reestablished. Something recognizable in the relationship opens up eyes, minds, and hearts. For Mary it was hearing her name spoken by one she cherished. For the disciples it was seeing the wounds that had been inflicted, knowing that they had let Jesus down and by doing so felt guilt for having left him, and for these two walking the road and inviting a stranger in, they recognize Jesus in the words and actions of that last meal together.

What is striking is that each vignette, each episode, reveals something about relationship with Jesus. Thinking on that, how is it that we can also recognize Jesus? Though some may have had the experience of seeing Jesus, I would hazard to guess that none of us here would claim to have had an experience quite like that of the followers of Christ in those days of resurrection appearances.

Still, that does not mean that we are bereft of any experience. With Jesus' death and resurrection, we are promised the gift of the Holy Spirit which becomes how we get to experience God's grace and Jesus' love today. It is the Holy Spirit that enables us to see Jesus and God at work in the world. And may I suggest, just like it was through relationship with Jesus that he was recognized by those who followed him in his living, that is how we also find Jesus now – in relationship. It is in relationship with one another that we experience the love, grace, compassion, and hope that is in Christ Jesus. It is in relationship to nature that we see God's glory.

And we know relationships take time. If you never look at nature, whether it is a cut flower that someone has given you, a butterfly, the budding leaves, a flowing stream, or a huge lake, or another snowflake, you will not appreciate the amazing grace, creativity, strength, and expanse of who God is. We are created beings along with all that God has created and we are meant to be connected to the earth.

We are also meant to be connected to each other. It is in being in relationship with each other that we can also see Jesus and God as we are created to be image bearers of God. And just as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit or in relationship

with one another, we are created to be in relationship with one another. To withdraw from human relationships with all their complications, heartbreak, and struggle is to remove oneself from understanding how God works in the world. It is to remove ourselves from love, grace, compassion, and hope.

There is so much more to be said about this, thank goodness there are more Sundays and more ways to learn. For the moment, let's go back to the meal. Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to his disciples. Have you noticed that we get to know one another better, when we sit and have a meal together, we built relationship. We build relationship with one another over a cup of tea or coffee or over food. We tend to linger longer and listen better when we take time. We get to know one another and we see each other more clearly. We begin to recognize the pain and see the joy.

Maybe it is not so astonishing that the men recognized Jesus over a meal. It will happen again before the Gospel of Luke closes, where Jesus stands among his disciples and they don't recognize him until he shows them his hands and feet and share a meal of broiled fish.

In part, it is because of this recognition of Jesus in a meal that we continue the practice of communion, of taking bread, blessing it, breaking it, and offering it to each other. It is in the communion meal that we see Jesus, in is in any meal that we are given the opportunity to see the image of God in one another. Over meals we build community.

If you do anything this week, maybe take the time to linger over a coffee, tea, drink, or meal, to build relationship with a loved one or someone that you do not well at all. Spend time in scripture, read a verse, say a prayer, get to know God, for it is also in relationship with God that we will recognize the image of God in one another and experience the grace of God in the world through Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through each of us.

See each other, see Christ, see the Holy Spirit at work. Thanks be to God. 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 allow for the creation of 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 that 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

God is generous and blesses us with life, purpose, and opportunities to serve in the world.

We offer our gifts in Christ's name, not seeking greater gain, but desiring to enrich life around us with God's love.

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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.
2. 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.
3. 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!

"Come to us, beloved Stranger." Words by Edith Sinclair Downing. ©1998 Selah Publishing Co., Inc.
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Benediction

Go now as witnesses of God's eternal presence.
The risen Christ has made himself known to you
in the breaking of bread,
so set your faith and hope on God,
living in genuine mutual love.

And may God hear and respond whenever you call;
may Christ Jesus make himself known to you in all things;
and may the Holy Spirit open your eyes and set your hearts on fire with love.
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen. © 2002 Nathan Nettleton, on his site Laughing Bird Liturgical Resources