

Immanuel United Church  
Easter Sunday, April 17th, 2022

Welcome

Christ is Risen!

**Christ is risen, indeed!**

Hope is alive!

**Hope is alive, indeed!**

God's love is eternal!

**Hallelujah!**

Let us give thanks for what God has done,  
what God *is doing!*

Call to Worship:

Dear, dear ones:

How very good it is to be here, together.

**How very beautiful you are, we are, together.**

The Living Word before us, here, now, calls for each and every one of us:

**we need each other;**

we need the wisdom and hope,  
the vision and dream that only you can offer,  
in tune with God's creation-song,  
that only God can offer.

**Let us worship together,**

in this blessed, quiet Easter morning. Hallelujah!

Hymn: VU 179 *Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Give Thanks*

Easter Prayer:

Keep your proclamations of grandeur.

Give me an easter as small as a seed.

**One that can be planted while it's still cold outside.**

**One that can be watered with tears,  
and demands time and patience to grow.**

I don't need to know how large it will become,  
how long until it blossoms,  
or even if it will be pretty.

**I only want it to grow roots that dig deep down,  
striving for life in the underbelly of the world.**  
Spare me the cosmic promises of other-worldly escape  
**and point me to the Sacred possibilities within reach.**  
Tell me again about how the nutrients born from decay  
**keep even the saddest places brimming with potential for life.**  
We pray this in the powerful name of the Risen One,  
Jesus of Nazareth,  
on this Easter Sunday.  
**Amen.**

– adapted from the prayer by Rev. M Barclay, enfleshed

Scripture: John 20:11-18

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

The Choir Anthem: VU 167 *Christ Is Risen*

Reflection: Easter, 3 AM, 5 AM, 9 AM... and in May

— Easter: 3 AM —

It is extremely significant that Easter did not come at daybreak.

The rising of the Human One of God was not synchronized with the rising of the astronomical sun of our heliocentric interplanetary system.

The light of day did not cause Easter.

The light of day only revealed to human sight the Easter event that had already occurred “while it was still dark” (v. 1). (Charles G. Adams)

Our greatest blessings often come to us when we can barely see them - when we have no reasonable right to expect them. Sometimes there is no empirical, political, social, or economic cause for hope, but still, we hope. We don't always see the goodness, the blessings in which we believe; we persist in believing more strongly in what we have not seen than the things we have seen. Sometimes we look for love and justice and cannot find them; but we still love and serve people who do not love us or seek justice for any but themselves. Sometimes people will think we have no reason or right to rejoice, but we still rejoice. All through the night of doubt and sorrow, eternal life is affirmed. Throughout the night, so dark for us, everlasting love is demonstrated. The ongoing presence, in our work and ministry, of the ancestors of our faith is made possible by God. The dawn can light the sky with its unique beauty, because the significance of Easter has already bloomed during the night. Easter does not come at daybreak. It calls us before the light breaks, still in the dark. We can sing Hallelujah, *and sing* it quietly to our hearts, to God, even when everyone else is asleep, at midnight, at 3 AM, at 5 AM... still in the quiet, dark abyss.

— Easter. 5 AM —

“But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet.” (V. 11)

The tombstone is already rolled away. The body of Jesus which should be there, inside the tomb (not the two angels - regardless of how breathtaking they might look), IF EVERYTHING WAS ALL RIGHT, is gone. Then, Mary figures out what must have happened: “Somebody came and carried away Jesus. EVERYTHING IS NOT ALL RIGHT!”

— Easter. 5:30 AM —

What we see with our own eyes does not always show us the truth and lend us the right information. In the Easter account we read today, Mary wrongly assumes the human one *she sees* standing in the tomb is a gardener (because Jesus must be dead; He can't be standing, alive!) who must have the missing information to help her understand why the body of Jesus is gone. But only the *voice* of the gardener tells her the truth — the human one is not a gardener, but the risen Jesus — , and leads to understanding, when “Jesus said to her, “Mary!””. Somehow, her sight fails to let Mary recognize the Risen One *by seeing*, but the voice she's *hearing*, opens her spiritual eyes and heart.

The light of day did not cause Easter.

Easter faith does not require the aid of light, of dawn or day.

The daybreak on the first Easter morning is not cause – it is correlation.

Today's Easter story teaches us that faith understands that Easter is not just one day of the year. Easter is always with us, most powerful in those miraculous moments, the moments of decisions and understanding that open our heart by hearing, by honouring. We can honour the presence of Easter's activity, even when the daylight to aid our seeing, foreseeing, searching and seeking the evidence to believe is so weak and dim.

**Easter is Every Awe-Struck Time of Eternal Revolt/Resurrection of love, kindness, justice, compassion.**

Then will we go together to climb the hill of death and walk down to the valley of oppression to roll away the rocks that hold our beloved ones, our neighbours in tombs, knowing that nights are, and powerfully can be, and ought to be, the times of Easter, not needing to wait until dawn, but while darkness surrounds us still.

— Easter. 9 AM —

Two days before the “worst blizzard in decades” arrived here, in Manitoba, Min-Goo and I went out for a walk on the Seine River trail we adore. (We just do it, whenever we can!)

The signs of Manitoban spring, beautiful and fresh in its unique way which makes my heart race and renew itself, were everywhere. As soon as we opened the door and went

out, we heard that the songbirds had come back. I could recognize five or six different kinds of song tones and style. They never let go of the golden chance to sing whenever the Sun is higher and warms the earth. That morning, a raccoon visited and Jah-bi and I enjoyed watching him doing some secret thing on top of the fence, which had been exclusively a squirrels-only highway. (Only the raccoon knows what it was doing there alone.) The geese were busy too. On the trail, each goose couple was so focused on gaining weight and asserting their territories, one of them, the male one, stood right in the middle of the trail and never moved, no intention to give way for me, and hissed at me, when I naively asked "Who are you?". We soon noticed it was not only wild animals who were busy, but the trees, looking dead, were displaying the energy of Easter all over... For example, snow was slowly and gradually melting everywhere, but there was the **significance of Easter** around the trunk of each tree! We saw every tree had its own circle, a ring of no-snow on the ground around them! (Show the picture) The Spring circles under the trees were everywhere! We asked, "What is that?" The whole woods became a tree circle polka-dot skirt...

Obviously, the only answer that can resolve this discrepancy of the different speeds of snow melting — between the no-snow circles around each tree and the rest of the forest — is to understand that there must be astounding activity going on between the trees and the earth, even if we might not see those Easter activities in our eyes' sight! We learned in our high school science classes that every movement of any object, any being, (in other words, when it "works"), creates energy - the "work" causes heat! Even in this cold, even if it is unnoticeably, by human eyes, gradual and slow, the trees have already started their thermal activity - - Easter activity - - changing their surroundings and themselves with heat and light. In the meantime, God's love, the cosmic love, powerfully flows within the body of the earth, through the trees from root to branch, through rivers, birds, raccoons geese, ... It makes me wonder, "If we are like a tree, are we creating snow-free circles around us, God's Easter activity zone, releasing love, changing the world, recording the signs of spring? The Creator's glory?"

Easter. In May.

Another thing I enjoy these days, other than gossiping about wild animals, is watching the show, Dickinson, on Apple TV, Emily Dickinson's coming-of-age story, starring Hailee Steinfeld. I have a favourite Dickinson poem, and I have chosen to share this poem with you on this Easter Sunday, because when I first read the poem, I could find a gardener, a tomb, Easter, and the master of the Easter Pageantry... The Risen Jesus as a cosmic song of God's perpetual love.

All these my banners be.  
I sow my pageantry  
In May —  
It rises train by train —  
Then sleeps in state again —  
My chancel — all the plain  
Today.

To lose — if one can find again —  
To miss — if one shall meet —  
The Burglar cannot rob — then —  
The Broker cannot cheat.  
So build the hillocks gaily  
Thou little spade of mine  
Leaving nooks for Daisy  
And for Columbine —  
You and I the secret  
Of the Crocus know —  
Let us chant it softly —  
"There is no more snow!"

To him who keeps an Orchis' heart —  
The swamps are pink with June.

May the mystery of Easter, which is wild and transforming even while it is still dark, gift you, accompany you, touch you, strengthen you, and may we recognize God's assurance that we will, you will, sow Easter pageantry in our own May time.

Hymn: VU 186 *Now the Green Blade Rises*

Offering:  
**Eternal One,**  
**we offer our gifts, reaching out from the familiarity of our community**  
**to the unknown aspects of life and living.**  
**May the Spirit encourage our sharing and our serving.**  
**Bless these gifts, O God, in Christ's name. Amen.**

Communion:

Christ is Risen!  
**Christ is risen indeed!**

God be with you.  
**And also with you.**  
Lift up your hearts.  
**We lift them up to our God.**

Let us give thanks to the God of resurrection!  
**It is right to give God thanks and praise!**

Creator, Crucis-Redeemer, and Holy Spirit;  
Source of Life, Living Water, and Bond of Love:  
We praise you for Jesus Christ,  
who reminds us that even in fear-filled days,  
cloaked with the powers of death,  
your everlasting love arises, and never leaves us.  
For we rejoice with all your people  
and with the angels — with *all creation*  
because life is stronger than death!  
As we proclaim the glory of your name:

**Holy is Jesus, Love Incarnate, the Risen Christ,  
whose Word gathers us together in community,  
whose grace meets us in our vulnerability,  
and whose loving faithfulness gives us renewed hope.**

In this meal, we remember Jesus, his promise,  
his presence on the margins,  
who revealed the sacredness in all life,  
and showed us how to live together, even among forces of destruction:

On the night before Jesus died,  
He took a loaf of bread,  
Gave thanks, broke it, and said,  
“Take and eat, this is my body, given for you.  
Do this, in remembrance of me.”

After supper, Jesus took the cup and poured, saying,  
"This cup that is poured out is the new covenant.  
Do this in remembrance of me."

In sharing this meal, we live out the mystery of our faith:  
We remember Christ's life of love, and friendship, and teaching,  
We remember Christ's dying, and rising to life again.

We pray for all in our world who are vulnerable,  
and especially for those whose vulnerability has deepened  
because of war or disaster.  
Bring new life to places mired in death, we pray.  
Roll back stones, reveal empty tombs,  
heal the wounds of violence and grief, assert the power of life.

Bless this bread and this cup,  
the wheat and the grape,  
the farmer and the harvest,  
the seed and the sower.  
These simple elements are shared in community,  
so that we may taste and see your goodness  
and become one body in Christ.

And now we pray to you, O God, in the words of Jesus,

Lord's Prayer

By Rev. Tim Mattine -Johnson a Tasmanian Aborigine

**Great Spirit, Creator of all,  
From the stars to all the earth,  
Loved and Respected by your name,  
May it happen that all should live your way,  
Following the purpose for all creation.  
Enable us to find what we need for today's journey.  
Forgive us when we go wrong  
As we forgive those who wrong us.  
Have compassion on us when we are being tested.  
Do not abandon us to fear and evil...  
Our hope is in your new community.**

**You are the one who can transform all creation,  
making everything new,  
now and for all eternity. Amen**

We break this bread, communion in Christ's body, once broken.  
We fill this cup, that it might become for us the cup of peace.

These are the gifts of God for the people of God.

**Though we are many, we are one body,  
for we all share in the one bread.**  
Come, for all is prepared!

The Distribution

Prayer after Communion:

**O Christ, we thank you for this feast of life.  
You commission us to  
feed as we have been fed,  
forgive as we have been forgiven,  
and love as we have been loved.  
Fed by your love,  
and strengthened by your life;  
we humbly accept your call to go  
into this world to live with hope,  
and to share your joy.**

Thanks be to God. Amen.

VU 175 *This Is the Day That God Has Made*

Commissioning and Benediction:

From this Easter hill on Golspie,  
We go forth to plant May Pageantry of resurrection...  
**“to lose — if one can find again —  
to miss — if one shall meet —”**

in the name of the God who makes us

*(In the name of the Bee — )*

In the name of the Christ who makes us free

*(And of the butterfly — )*

In the name of the Spirit who makes us one

*(And of the Breeze — )*

Amen!

Christ is risen! **Christ is risen indeed!**