

Immanuel United Church  
Third Sunday of Easter  
May 1st, 2022

Welcome

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer: Song of Earth: Commitment\*

On the first day of resurrection, Earth quaked  
and celebrated with a bright light in the tomb.

**On this day we celebrate the light, and promise Earth  
we will strive to remove all nuclear death.**

On the first day of resurrection, Earth quaked  
and an angel descended from the sky.

**On this day we celebrate sky, and promise Earth  
we will find new ways to keep our atmosphere fresh and clean.**

On the first day of resurrection, Earth quaked  
and a stone rolled back to reveal a cave.

We celebrate our rocks, our soil, our caves, and we promise Earth  
**we will work to save its soil and its forests from destruction.**

On the first day of resurrection, Earth quaked  
as the sun rose on a very new day.

**We celebrate our sun, our moon, and our seasons and we promise Earth  
to refrain from ripping into the ozone layer and destroying life on Earth.**

On the first day of resurrection, Earth quaked  
and all life on earth felt the rumble of Christ rising.

**We celebrate all life that emerges from Earth, and we promise Earth  
that we will work to save all threatened species, including humans.**

On every day of resurrection, Earth quakes somewhere  
reminding us to celebrate and sustain life.

**We celebrate with all creation, and we promise Earth  
to hold life sacred and find ways that sustain all forms of life. Amen.**

\* from *Worshiping in Season: Ecology and Christ Through the Liturgical Year*, Joseph E. Bush Jr.

Hymn: VU 185 *You Tell Me That the Lord Is Risen*

Scripture: 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. 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. 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. Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." 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. 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. 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. When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." 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. 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. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

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." 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." 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. 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.” (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”

The Choir Anthem: *We Gather at Your Table, Lord*

Reflection: Peter’s Loophole, Christ’s LOVE

In our lives, we encounter moments and times when we go through or experience a certain spiritual “injury”.

For example, recently, Jah-bi, my 10 year old younger son, came home and told me how he felt hurt at school that day. He asked his friend (his one and only best friend in his new school) to go with him for support when he was going to complain about something important to his teacher. His friend said yes. Then, on the way, when Jah-bi was actually taking action, his friend, for some unexplained reason, stopped following him and turned around when they were at the office. Jah-bi was so confused and upset. He wondered how a “friend” could break a promise and not help. For a while it was a significant, spiritual injury for Jah-bi as every day he tried to figure out what caused his friend to have a change of mind. (Now, they play together happily again.)

I have been told by some that they enjoy watching K-dramas on Netflix these days. In the pre-Netflix era, in the old days, Koreans almost only watched Korean dramas. The world had not yet known Korean dramas and movies and seen their global sensation. The frequent topic/ theme that almost every one of Korean dramas played was about the spiritual, emotional injury between father and son, or father and daughter, mother and son, and so on. This kind of parent-child injury is like an arrow; when one shoots the other, the sharp edge of the arrow comes back to the shooter. The pain of anger and sorrow go both ways.

Have you ever experienced or gone through a spiritual injury? If you had one, how did it occur in your life? How did it impact you?

Grief, loss, poverty, illness, being disowned by one’s family for their identity, divorce, violence, disappointment, injustice, all of these can also leave in us a deep spiritual mark. Even a moment in which no one or no object has intended physical, emotional, or spiritual injury there could be one. I have a personal example. I remember, one night, two years after I came to Canada, I was walking on the UBC campus alone, after class in winter. Of course, it’s not a snow story in BC. But the darkness was the oppressor. What was so shocking and oppressive to me was that it was only three hours after I had gone into the afternoon class. And now at 5 pm, the entire universe was changed to pitch

black. Not only the thick darkness of the time surprised me but it was so utterly dark, the sky seemed so heavy. For this reason, every time I opened the VST gate and came out at 5 pm, I felt the cloud of the jet-black night hovering just above my head. It was that low. The weight of the darkness was too close to the earth. Honestly, I felt threatened. I might well have been pressed down! When I told this story to another woman, a student and immigrant, she calmed me down: She said that she went through the same thing, and everyone let her know that the second year of living on a foreign land is the hardest. Spiritual alienation can be one example of an injury in one's life.

In today's Gospel, Peter is encountering Jesus with his spiritual injury to the body of Christ — by his denial. This is their first meeting since Peter's triple denial outside the house of the high priest (John 18). When people asked Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" he denied three times, saying "I am not." His denial not only denied Jesus, but denied himself, his faith, his identity and the core of his heart where his self-affirmation would come from. His own flaw and vulnerability did not have the light to heal his 'hole', until the Risen Jesus sat with him and began the triple-love-affirmation dialogue that parallels Peter's triple denial. Probably most of us can understand how such a conversation can be difficult and so is often painfully avoided. It isn't easy to lay down with care and courage between the one afflicted and the one who has caused the spiritual injury. Centering the 'spiritual injury', still sustaining each other with mutual love, is not easy. In the Gospel story, which tells the story of the last of the resurrection appearances of Jesus among the disciples, we are haunted by Jesus' questions: "Simon, Son of John, do you love me more than these? Simon, son of John, do you love me? Simon, son of John, do you love me?" With Peter, we are heavily troubled by the repetition. It transports us back to that shameful, petrifying, pitch-dark night in the garden of the high priest some days before. Today's Gospel story tells us that by Jesus' asking the same question about Peter loving him, repeating it three times, made Peter "feel hurt". When Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?". Peter answered, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."

Let us note: in his questioning, Jesus evokes Peter's denial. But it also transforms the denial into a powerful affirmation of mutual love, service, and commitment to care for all members of the body of Christ ("Feed my lambs/Tend my sheep/Feed my sheep.") Peter's love for Jesus, a love he professed that would include laying down his life for his friend (John 13), faltered when tested, and yet this flaw, this vulnerability, this loophole of Peter changes and is filled and healed with God's law of love. Jesus' triple question - "Do you love me?" (Here, Jesus himself is vulnerable; like a child, like a lover, he insists on knowing if the other loves him.) positively pushes Peter to follow the right path *through the spiritual injury* which he had inflicted on Jesus (and, therefore, which he had inflicted on himself too) and to search for the truth of love in himself. The Christ-

centered table, conversation, circle should be held as one of communion which Jesus shared with his friends (i.e. the breakfast at the lakeshore) that “breaks” the fast of denial due to fear, discomfort or indifference. We might falter, when tested, but this loophole of our own would be filled and would transform when the ice of denial melts, when Christ’s loving affirmation enters, when the Spring rises up in the sky and lets the clear-flowing water make a new way. Love is the heat of the Easter day.

One more note: Jesus asks “Do you love me?” three times before he says to Peter, “Follow me.” Love is the foremost, sufficient, and triggering condition that activates our following. We may follow Jesus, or say that we do, but there may be no love! The act of following doesn’t guarantee/prove loving. Only when we love the Human One with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, will our steps follow that of the Risen One, on the path towards healing and reconciliation, the warm truth of the Spring.

Have you ever experienced or gone through a spiritual injury? Would you join the Risen One’s calling at the lakeshore, and sit at his kitchen table (with charcoal grilled fish and old-style ancient barley bread! So fancy!), with Jesus, who says, “Feed my lambs” “Tend my sheep”? Would you follow him and feed, tend, affirm, love the body of Christ, including loving yourself? If we hear Jesus asking first, “Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?”, would we be able to answer his call, “Follow me.” in a new way?

Hymn: VU 563 *Jesus, You Have Come to the Lakeshore*

Offering

Prayer:

Adapted from “You Give Us Hope This Easter Day” by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

You give us hope this Easter Season:  
O God, in Christ, you make us new!  
**As we’ve been blessed,  
may our gifts bless others, too.**

When people flee from drought or storm,  
when children cry, in need of bread —  
**May these gifts keep victims warm  
and see that hungry ones are fed.**

When workers suffer, long-oppressed,

when neighbours seek to organize,  
**when those abused weep in distress —**  
**May our gifts change people's lives.**

When churches seek to tend the earth,  
when gardens grow on urban lands —  
**May these gifts provide new birth,**  
**clear-flowing waters, helping hands.**

O Gracious God, you give us life!  
This gift is one we're called to share.  
**May we now serve the risen Christ**  
**through our gifts of love and care.**

Communion: *From Enfleshed.com*

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!**

Community of saints,  
beloveds of God,  
we are invited to come and gather at the table of love and liberation,  
**to feast on the dreams of God,**  
**to be nourished by but a taste of what God desires to do among us.**

God calls us from institutional halls of power,  
From shelters and the streets;  
God calls us from classrooms and pulpits,  
Gay bars and prison cells.  
**God calls us as we are, from wherever we are,**  
**to come and be in solidarity with Christ,**  
**who lives and loves on the margins.**

Jesus says "Follow me."  
and live abundantly,

turning from all that claims blessings  
flow from money, power, or control.

**Come, and  
love relentlessly;  
following Christ on paths of uncertainty,  
taking risks for one another,  
calling down unjust power from its throne  
and lifting up the lowly,  
the impoverished,  
the burdened.**

To answer the call of Christ is to find ourselves  
no matter our social location,  
choosing to align ourselves with the causes  
of the marginalized, the oppressed,  
the outcast, and the isolated,  
**with the faith that  
together,  
we might en flesh new possibilities  
of healing,  
of connection,  
of freedom from all that destroys.**

When these are the desires of our hearts,  
we open ourselves to God.  
Blessed are those, Jesus said, who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.  
**And so let us come to the table,  
expectant,  
eager,  
open  
to tasting the rich blessings of heaven  
born from unexpected places, and people, and experiences.**

In this meal,  
we remember the life, death, and resurrection of  
the One who still takes on flesh among us today.  
On the night he would be arrested,  
Jesus gathered his friends and companions.  
In the midst of a tense and dangerous time,

they found each other at table,  
connecting over the story of God-enfleshed among them.  
And as they did so, Jesus took bread, gave thanks to God,  
broke the bread and shared it with his disciples saying,  
**“Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.  
Do this in remembrance of me.”**

When the supper was over, he also took the cup,  
gave thanks to God, and shared it with his disciples, saying,  
**“Drink from this, all of you; this is the cup of the new covenant.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”**

And so we pray,  
Come Holy Spirit,  
Breath of God,  
Renewer of life,  
settle on these gifts and all who gather here,  
that we might be transformed in our remembrance  
of your wholly love,  
your eternal embrace,  
and your grace that makes all things news.  
For the sake of our shared lives,  
the life of this land on which we live,  
and the lives of those yet to come,  
nourish us and renew our hope  
that Christ may rise again among us.

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.

Hymn: *MV 212 Sent Out in Jesus' Name*

Amen