

LEURA UNITING CHURCH Sunday Service 26th April 2020

CALL TO WORSHIP

Christ is risen

He is risen indeed!

Faith will triumph

Love will overcome!

The joy of Christ be with you

And with your spirit! AMEN.

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Hymn 387 *Christ is alive, let Christians sing.* [Note that the words of hymns appear on pp.5-6 below]

PRAYER OF ADORATION, CONFESSION & THANKSGIVING

Psalm 116: 1-6

I love the LORD, who has heard my cry.

The Lord inclined an ear to me;

my call will rise Godward as long as I live.

The snares of death encompassed me;

the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;

I suffered distress and anguish.

Then I called on the name of the LORD:

“O LORD, I pray, save my life!”

The Lord is gracious and righteous;

our God is merciful.

The LORD protects the simple;

when I was brought low, God saved me. [*Prayer continues ...*]

Gracious, ever-living God, you have shared your life in Jesus in the wonder and mystery of ordinary life. There are so many things we have been through, so many steps we have taken: it is so helpful to know that you have taken them with us. In our joys and in the coarse hurt of grief; through our required journeys and pleasurable ones; through our health, illnesses and pain; in our sins and regrets, you have accompanied us. Thank you. And we dare to thank you again along this bumpy road of life, that we are not abandoned to it. Knowing your patience and compassion, we lay our lives before you Hearing your call to fuller life and service, we turn to you and make our offering once again - the offering of our willingness to follow Jesus to the end of the road. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE (Psalm 116:7)

Return, O my soul, to your rest,

for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.

Your sins are forgiven:

Praise and thanks to God forever!

Hymn 361 *The day of resurrection!* [Note that the words of hymns appear on pp.5-6 below]

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2: 14 and 36—41

Gracious God, put your law within us

And write it upon our hearts [Jer 31:33]

Luke 24: 13—35

For the Gospel of the Lord:



Travellers,
Clay Enoch Sculpture

Praise to Jesus Christ, the Word!

SHARING THE PEACE. If you have companions at home, say to each other “Peace be with you.” If you are alone, receive the peace of God as a blessing for you. You may also like to surprise a friend or acquaintance, by calling them and offering them the blessing of peace.

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SHARING THE WORD: “**The things about Jesus**” (from Mark Hillis)

Luke 24: 13-35

“Here’s the thing....” How often do you hear these words? As someone sums up their argument? When a person gets to the point of what they are saying, they sometimes add, “Here’s the thing....”

Several English translations of Luke’s Gospel seem to be doing that with us today, as he tells the story of two disciples, disappointed and tired, walking the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus with a seemingly unknown companion. From verse 13 of Chapter 24 Luke relates: “Two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, ... talking with each other about *all these things* that had happened. The unknown companion says to them after a while, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” Cleopas answers, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know *the things* that have taken place there in these days?” *What things?* he asks. “*The things about Jesus of Nazareth*, they reply. 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.” Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer *these things* and then enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them *the things* about himself in all the scriptures.

If you will allow, the reading goes on to more verses, where *these things* are even more evident:

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of *these things*. ⁴⁹ And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”¹

Notice how the disciples returning to Jerusalem from Emmaus behave. They have experienced a revelation! The person whom they thought to inform about current events, informed them as well. He revealed himself through an ordinary and wonderfully familiar act – breaking bread with his friends! But it doesn’t stop there.

The two friends decide to subject their new knowledge to the scrutiny of the whole community. They make themselves accountable to the other disciples rather than setting up their own little show in Emmaus, based on their own private revelation.

At a special group leadership training seminar a few decades ago, I was asked to read the Gospel passage that we heard today from Luke 24. I had gone along to the seminar with some personal issues weighing heavily upon me. Suddenly, the immensity of this story from Luke hit me with great force: it was a strong, joyous feeling that Jesus was truly with me along the path I was treading with others. The encounter with the mystery companion of Luke chapter 24 was, that day, as personal and real for me as it may have been for those disciples from so long ago. It became important for me to witness to the reality of the presence of Jesus among us today. We all have our own ways of behaving as witnesses. The living Spirit of God will show us how to give an account of our faith that is visible and truthful in the world. As part of a community of faith, Jesus invites us to break the bread of his presence with other companions we meet along the way.

¹ [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#). (1989). (Lk 24:45–49). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Where has all the flour gone? Millions of people around the world are baking their own bread at home during the COVID 19 lock-down! Flour and yeast are flying off the shelves of supermarkets faster than the flour mills can replenish them. Bread is such a staple of life. It is a comfort. It is also a powerful symbol of community for the Christian Church. Perhaps our witness to new life in Jesus can begin right here in our own homes? May we rediscover the mystery of Jesus revealed in our midst through the care we take with each other, and the bread that we bake and break with one another? Our own thankfulness and praise will mark the beginning of our witness to Jesus alive.

The truth of the matter, according to Luke, is that Jesus has been raised from the dead, and that he is about to induct his disciples into that truth which is not public knowledge. *Here's the thing:* The only way for that wonderful news to be communicated would be through their testimony. And according to Luke, this is where we today must enter the story and participate. *Are we bold enough to go public with our Good News about Jesus?*

Prayer: Spirit of God, open our eyes to the companionship of Jesus in the midst of the ordinary things of our lives. When extraordinary events overtake us, help us to recognise you in our midst, sharing our anxiety and urging us to reach out in your name. Amen.



Christ and Disciples
on Road to Emmaus,
Jan Wildens.

Hymn 382 *Now the green blade rises* [Note that the words of hymns appear on pp.5-6 below]

Silent Meditation time.

NOTICES. Do be sure to check our latest church bulletin.

OFFERING & DEDICATION PRAYER. Whether it is our gifts of time and loving actions or simply our presence, we have an offering to make. If you wish to sustain a monetary offering, follow the guidelines in the church bulletin.

We make our offerings of our time and our love in joy and thankfulness to God, Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & LORD'S PRAYER (from Stephen White)²

Let us pray

Risen God, faithful and merciful, we bring to you our prayers for all your people; hear our prayers and answer us when we call on you.

² Adapted from 'Let Us Pray' by Janet Nelson

We pray for your world, for leaders and nations, for your people in places of fear, confusion, persecution and strife.

As you came in peace to your frightened and bewildered disciples, make yourself known today to all who feel abandoned and afraid.

Risen God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for your church, for all theologians, teachers and pastors and all who in deed or word proclaim your gospel.

As you opened the Scriptures to the disciples on the Emmaus Road, make yourself known today through your holy Word.

Risen God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for all who search for you, for all who look for meaning in the emptiness of life.

As you made yourself known to the women who sought you at the tomb, make yourself known today to those who long for you.

Risen God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for our community, for those with whom we work and learn, for our families, our friends and for ourselves.

We think about the people on our hearts today.

As you made yourself known by breaking bread with your friends, make yourself known today in those with whom we share our lives.

Risen God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for all in need of your comfort, reassurance and hope, for all who suffer anguish, loneliness or despair, especially during this time of Coronavirus lockdown. We remember the people in Nursing Homes who cannot have visitors, and many who can't understand why.

As you made yourself known to those locked behind doors of pain and grief, make yourself known today to those who are in sorrow or distress.

Risen God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for all those who are labouring day by day to provide us with the essentials we need; delivery personnel, posties and retail workers.

We pray for the medical people; doctors, nurses, orderlies, ambulance staff, everyday working with people who may have the virus.

We pray for our teachers, and we think especially of Kate, Kathy and Steph at this time, as they struggle with technology to provide valuable lessons to our children and young people; and also as they negotiate the problems of managing staggered face to face teaching along side of online teaching in coming weeks.

We pray for our politicians and their advisers as they try and work out the best way forward for our community.

As Jesus brought peace to his disciples, may all people experience his peace, hope and wisdom.

Risen God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We remember all who have died in your love, those from this parish who have gone before us and all who are dear to us.

As you have made yourself known to your followers in every age, make yourself known to us today, that, with Mary Magdalene and all the saints, we may recognise you in our midst and, through eternity, worship you.

Risen God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer. AMEN.

BENEDICTION

Hymn 778

Shalom to you now, shalom, my friends.
May God's full mercies bless you, my friends.
In all your living and through your loving,
Christ be your shalom, Christ be your shalom.*

שָׁלוֹם

[* Shalom is the Hebrew greeting for wellbeing and "peace."]

Hymn 387

1. Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.
The cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises ring;
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.
2. Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time.
3. In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, where even hope has died.
4. Women and men, in age and youth
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth,
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.
5. Christ is alive, and comes to bring
good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring
with joy, with justice, love, and praise.

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Hymn 382

1. Now the green blade rises
from the buried grain,
wheat that in the dark earth
many days has lain:
love lives again,
that with the dead has been:

*Love has come again,
like wheat that springs
up green.*

Hymn 361

1. The day of resurrection!
earth, tell it out abroad;
the passover of gladness,
the passover of God:
from death to life eternal,
from earth up to the sky,
our Christ has brought us over
with hymns of victory.
2. Our hearts be pure from evil
that we may see aright
the Lord in rays eternal
of resurrection light;
and listening to his greeting
may hear, so calm and strong,
his own 'All hail' and, hearing,
may raise the victors' song.
3. Now let the heav'ns be joyful
and earth her song repeat,
the whole world shout in triumph
her living Lord to greet;
let all things seen and unseen
their notes of gladness blend,
for Christ the Lord has risen,
our joy that has no end.

John of Damascus c.675–749 *tr.* John Mason Neale
1818–66 *alt.*

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2. In the grave they laid him,
Love whom hate had slain,
thinking that he never
would awake again,
laid in the earth,
like grain that sleeps unseen.
Love has come again, ...

3. Up he sprang at Easter,
like the risen grain,
he who for the three days
in the grave had lain,
raised from the dead
my living Lord is seen:
Love has come again, ...

4. When our hearts are wintry,
grieving, or in pain,
then your touch can call us
back to life again —
fields of our hearts
that dead and bare have been:
Love has come again, ...

John Macleod Campbell Crum 1872–1958 *alt*
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