

MORRIS-ROSENFELD ECUMENICAL SHARED MINISTRY

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 2024

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Due to copyright limitations, we are unable to print the words to many of the songs. However, our musicians have chosen music to fit the scriptures. We invite you to look up the words in your worship book and ponder them. If you do not have a worship book, ponder the words of one of your favourite hymns and listen for God's voice. Those who have the internet may find the songs on YouTube.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none.

~William Shakespeare

BEFORE WE WORSHIP, WE REFLECT...

The climate crisis is a mirror; it accuses us and shows us our sin. The climate crisis is a result of the overconsumption of goods and fossil fuels by people in the Global North, yet it is people in the Global South who feel the effects of our overconsumption most acutely. Today's texts hold a mirror to our universal siblinghood in Christ and offer a joyous vision of life in a redeemed world. The believers of Acts are of "one heart and soul" (4:32), 1 John celebrates that "we have fellowship with one another" (1:7), and the psalmist extols believers "[living] together in unity" (Ps. 133:1). What kinds of ecological impacts would it have if we, the body of Christ, ordered our lives to this vision?

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge we gather and worship on Treaty 1 Territory, the original lands of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Anishinew, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation.

We come before you this morning with our hearts full of love and concern for our community. In Christ, we know that we are forgiven. In Jesus, we are a new creation, called to love each other as you love us, and called to act as God's ambassadors of love and of reconciliation. We ask you, Beloved, to pour out your Spirit upon us, upon our neighbours, upon our leaders, and upon those who have come to this place with hearts and minds eager to help. We lift up our prayers to you and look to receive your blessing. Amen.

GATHERING SONG: VU 352 I Danced In The Morning

CENTERING PRAYER

Lord of life, we pray for all who bring your word of life as light to those in darkness; for those who bring your word of peace to those enslaved by fear; for those who bring your word of love to those in need of comfort. Lord of love and Lord of peace, Lord of resurrection life, be known through our lives and through your power. Christ is risen! Alleluia!

CHILDREN'S CHAT

When I was a student in university, I did not have a lot of money, neither did many of my friends. Still, we had enough...enough money for rent, enough money to buy food and clothes, enough money to help each other out if needed. That is what the early Christian church did with their members. Everyone was responsible for everyone else. That way, everyone was looked after! The people shared what they had, sold what they didn't need and shared the money they received.

So, what does all that sharing look like? It looks like a pizza party!!

I decided to host a pizza party for my friends. None of us had much money, so I planned the party this way: I had the ingredients to make the pizza dough. Then, each person I invited, I asked them to bring one ingredient for the pizza – one person brought the salami, another the pepperoni. Still another the green pepper, another the onion. There was also cheese, mushrooms, pizza sauce. When everyone arrived, we chopped up the ingredients and put them on the pizza dough. Then we baked the pizza.

It was really good pizza that tasted so much better because my friends helped make it and we were looking after each other with our one ingredient, shared, to make a pizza that fed everybody!! I felt the love of Jesus in my apartment that night. The love of Jesus was in each of my friends as we celebrated our friendship and ate the pizza. None of us had a lot. Together, we had enough. Thank you, Jesus!

CANADIAN LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF: Burundi | Ensuring long-term food security

In Burundi, conflict and a changing climate have left thousands of families facing hunger—and single mothers like Euphemie are facing the worst of it.

Thanks to your support, our local partners are providing both immediate food assistance and longer-term livelihood support to vulnerable families like hers. Families are being provided livelihood training, equipment, supplies, livestock, and seeds to grow their own food, improving the family's nutrition and developing new income sources.

For Euphemie, the emergency food rations meant being able to feed her children while she continued working on other people's lands. Then, through our partnership with Canadian Foodgrains Bank, she was able to build a home and start her own farm. Euphemie borrowed funds to invest in avocado farming, and received training on modern farming plus the tools to increase what she can produce.

Euphemie has plans for more, and says that with your support, "I can continue on my journey of becoming a great farmer."

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Guide us, O God, by your Word, and Holy Spirit, that in your light we may see light, in your truth find freedom, and in your will discover peace; through Christ our Lord, Amen.

READINGS AND PSALM

First Reading: Acts 4:32-35

While the apostles testified to others about the resurrection of Jesus, the early Christian community shared what they owned or sold their possessions to help their fellow believers who were in need.

³²Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. ³³With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. ³⁵They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Psalm 133

How good and pleasant it is to live together in unity. (Ps. 133:1)

¹How good and how pleasant it is, when kindred live together in unity!

²**It is like fine oil upon the head, flowing down upon the beard, upon the beard of Aaron, flowing down upon the collar of his robe. R**

³It is like the dew of Hermon flowing down upon the hills of Zion. For there the LORD has commanded the blessing: life forevermore. **R**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1--2:2

The opening of this letter serves as a reality check. The reality of God is light, but our confessed reality has been sin. God cleanses us from our sinful reality through Christ's death so that we live in fellowship with Christ and walk in God's light.

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.

^{2:1}My 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; ²and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Gospel: John 20:19-31

The story of Easter continues as the risen Jesus appears to his disciples. His words to Thomas offer a blessing to all who entrust themselves in faith to the risen Lord.

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

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So 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."

²⁶A 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." ²⁷Then 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." ²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

³⁰Now 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.

HYMN: VU 375 Spirit of Gentleness

SERMON: Acts 4:32-35: "Welcome to Resurrection Central", Rev. Kenneth Emerson Sauer

Many people are willing to accept Christianity as an explanation of life, but they are not yet prepared to accept it as a way of life. It is clear—from a passage such as the one from Acts this morning---that Christianity has always been a way of life...a way from which certain explanations and inferences about life can be inevitably drawn.

There is an inseparable association between the apostles' witness to the resurrection of Jesus and the life of the community. It is as if the community itself was the demonstration of the Resurrection.

In the Church the new power was at work not only to heal the sick but to transform self-centered individuals into self-sacrificing members of Christ's Body. It is of the utmost importance to notice this moral and spiritual change in the life of believers.

Every congregation is, at least potentially, a Resurrection congregation, where into it come people who have been primarily concerned with their own affairs and by God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit change their lives. They come to know the needs of other people. They share what they have with those who have less or nothing at all. Their own burdens are lessened as the shoulders of their brothers and

sisters in Christ assume part of the weight. As a result, their own lives begin to resurrect and experience new life to the point where their old lives seemed like a narrow and useless existence.

Abraham, according to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, “was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.” In the same way many men and woman are looking for a community in which they can find meaning for their lives, where they can live together with others, working toward a common goal without the hatred and discord which is so prevalent in the world today.

There is no room for intellectual snobbery within the Church of Jesus Christ. There is no room for social superiority, no place for racial intolerance, no room for any of that especially when the sole purpose for one’s existence is to “testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

The inner change that has taken place, and is taking place within those of us who have been born of God through faith in the resurrected Christ, is the main reason that God joins us together with others. It’s God’s plan that whatever grace we have received from God will be communicated through us to those with whom we come in contact.

It is our very nature, as the Church of Jesus Christ, to season---as salt does---whatever is around us. The divine nature of the resurrection experience is to be spread to whatever we touch as salt. We are called to allow ourselves to be poured out into every relationship we have, and into every life with which we come in contact.

We are to taste different than the world. As a young person, I was surrounded a great deal of the time by Christians who were centered on allowing the Love of God to be seen through them. I knew the taste of the followers of Christ. As long as we are testifying to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus it is impossible for us to conceal our saltiness and our love! And any attempt to do so, is completely contrary to the plan of God for our lives.

It is the power of God to change the hearts, minds and lives of humankind. It is the power of God to shine light in the darkness of a sin-filled world. It is the power of love over hate, life over death. It is the power of God that believers in Christ can be “one in heart and mind”, it is the power of God that creates “the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus.” This is the Church of Jesus Christ. This is a resurrected congregation!

This is the community through which God demonstrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the place where the sick are to be healed! This is the place where self-centered individuals become self-sacrificing individuals! God has specifically commanded us to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Although God alone changes people’s hearts, God usually chooses to do this through human instruments. Therefore, it is our responsibility to diligently do everything we can to be the heart and love of Christ to each other.

As a resurrected congregation our single aim is to witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Our calling is to look at our lives individually and corporately to see if we are doing just that.

Notice that the lives of the members of the early Church were based on NEED, not want. What are the basic needs of a human being: food, clothing, shelter, medical care. Bottom line—you can sit or sleep on the floor more comfortably when you have a roof over your head, food in your belly and no aches or pains. Kind of flies in the face of what most of us possess in our own homes, doesn’t it. Imagine the freedom of owning nothing, AND having all of your needs met! Just think about it! Think of how much stress would be removed from your life!! THAT was the life of those early Christians. It was their statement, their personal way of testifying to the resurrected Christ! All were looked after, all NEEDS met. There was community, communication, accountability, repentance, forgiveness.

Obviously, our situation is very different from that of 2,000 + years in Palestine. Or is it? Resurrected congregations first look at the needs of others and how those needs can be met. That is their priority. Their gaze is outward bound. When the call from God is followed, the rest falls into place.

The resurrection is real. This community of faith is real. Our calling is the same as the early Christians. Can we let go as they did? Can we trust as they did? Can we find the balance? Jesus never claimed it would be easy. He just claimed it could be done. He lived his life as proof of that fact.

The Resurrection calls us to new life in Christ. That calling involves self-examination. Rather than run from such scrutiny, embrace it! This is new life in Christ we are talking here—life can only get better! So, as a body of Christ, let's let go, let God, and let the Spirit flow! Amen!

HYMN OF THE MONTH: VU 563 Jesus, You Have Come To The Lakeshore

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Rejoicing that Jesus is risen and love has triumphed over fear, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need of good news.

Your church cries out, O God, and you listen. As you drew near to the disciples, draw near to us this day. Breathe on us your Holy Spirit, that our faith is renewed and we witness to your love. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Your creation cries out, O God, and you listen. Nurture trees, crops, wildflowers, and all growing things. Guide farmers, gardeners, arborists, and others who tend the soil and nurture plants into life. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Your world cries out, O God, and you listen. Guide police, firefighters, paramedics, and other first responders to work for the well-being of communities and the dignity of every person, that no one may need to live in fear. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Your children cry out, O God, and you listen. Hear your people crying out for justice, for an end to racism and other oppression, and for a world where all are fed and safe. We pray for all who cry out in suffering or pain. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Your congregations cry out, O God, and you listen. Renew pastors, deacons, musicians, and other staff, administrators, and volunteers who facilitated Holy Week and Easter worship. Open our hearts to discern where God calls each of us to serve. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Accept our gratitude, O God, for the lives of those who now rest in you. Grant us your peace amid our fears. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Into your hands, most merciful God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your abiding love; through Jesus Christ, our resurrected and living Lord.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

SENDING SONG: VU 356 Seek Ye First The Kingdom

BENEDICTION

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The God of resurrection power, the Christ of unending joy, and the Spirit of Easter hope † bless you now and always.

Amen.

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