

Easter Sunday Prayers, April 17, 2022

Prayer Concerns

Aleta Behie, Bonnie & Paul, Cherie Doyon, Larry Seabrook, Evelyn Crafts' granddaughter Brittany, Rona's mother, Vi, Jenny & family, Randy Greer, Cathy Tredenick, Karl Crocker, Linda Hepburn, Sharon Axford, Lori Ann, Fraser (in Poland helping refugees escape Ukraine) the people of Ukraine, Clarence, Hill family, Shirley Griffin, Tucker Johnson, Gerry Coull

Prayers of the People:

O God, with faces touched by the light of a new day, and hearts warmed by our prayers and praises, we come before you to pray for the needs of our world. Into the light of Easter morning we raise those who are struggling with illness, with despair over their lives, or with the breakdown of relationships.

Silence

May the light of Christ shine upon them.

All: May the light of Christ shine upon them.

Into the light of Easter morning, we bring those places in our world where war, violence, poverty and need are the experiences of everyday life. We pray especially for Ukrainian citizens, those who are displaced, those who are trapped, those who are starting new lives in Canada and other countries, those who are at home, fighting for freedom. We pray for those who are mourning the deaths of loved ones, neighbors, homes, and cities.

Silence

May the light of Christ shine upon them.

All: May the light of Christ shine upon them.

Into the light of Easter morning, we bring the headline news of this weekend, including news that a 6th wave of Covid is here. We hold in our hearts first responders, medical officers, hospitals and caregivers in homes, retirement homes and nursing homes. We lift up those who are suffering from illness, mental and physical; and are burdened by economic hardship caused by high prices, or unemployment or relationship fracture.

Silence

May the light of Christ shine upon them.

All: May the light of Christ shine upon them.

And into the light of Easter morning we bring ourselves, the private struggles, the heart's yearnings, the hidden dreams, the unfulfilled potential.

Silence

May the light of Christ shine upon us.

All: May the light of Christ shine upon us.

We praise you for Jesus, and for the promise of new life and fresh beginnings of which the Spring season and Easter season give promise. Be with our church as we enter a new season of our witness and service, and bless our families and loved ones here and far. May

the fragrance of your love enfold them and grant them, and all your children peace at this and sacred season of resurrection glory.

May the light of Christ shine upon us.

All: May the Light of Christ shine upon us. AMEN

re: Worship~ written by Ann Siddall, UBP & adapted for use by M. Bell

Scriptures: John 20: 1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, ‘They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.’ ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and 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. ¹³They 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.’ ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?’ 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.’ ¹⁶Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni!’ (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus 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.”’ ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Sermon: IN EVERY END, A NEW BEGINNING

The Reverend Margaret Anne Bell, B.A. M.Div.

On this last Easter Sunday at which I have the honor of being your pastor, *I am grateful to God and to you that we are here together!* Although the pandemic is not quite done with us or the world, this Easter day looks very different from the last two. You likely don’t need reminding, but for Easter Sunday 2020, I preached an Easter message from the church office. It was the first time that I recorded a video on my cell phone and I was not at all sure what I was doing. With Phyllis’ able assistance, the sermon was posted on YouTube. It was a few weeks later that Shirley suggested that I might turn my phone horizontally and thus rid the video of black margins!

Although in 2020 we were a bit wary of meeting, a few of us met outside for the Easter Sunrise service at Dayna's oak tree. But we did not go inside for breakfast afterward. One church member had actually suggested to me that even meeting outside and distanced we might be giving the wrong message to our community about how we were treating the Covid issue. But likely because of Covid, for the first year that I could remember, there was absolutely no traffic that Sunday, save for the handful of Baptists who wanted to remember Jesus' rising---together.

Then, for Easter 2021, the church was still closed for public worship. However, the choir, musicians, Phyllis and I videoed the Easter service inside the sanctuary on Maundy Thursday which was our regular choir practice night.

As I watched a portion of that video this week, I came away impressed at the volume of sound that emanated from the masked choir members; all 12 of them, as we sang the Easter hymns! Edith was there. We miss Edith!

The Easter flowers were wonderful, too! Of course it felt rather odd to celebrate Easter before Good Friday, and at nighttime. However, if we had not installed the video equipment when we did, trying to do services would have been stranger and harder.

Do I get an Amen?

Easter 2021 we met around Dayna's oak tree at Sunrise. That little service provided a welcome piece of normal. Afterward, people stood around in small groups and chatted for some time. We missed one another. And we still miss those who have not been comfortable or able to return to the church for worship. We miss having children for Children's time and providing Sunday School and Nursery. We miss those who have moved away to be closer to family and we miss the dear ones who died and we missed attending the funerals of dear ones and church friends because of pandemic restrictions and concerns. We've missed a lot that was normal and familiar to us in the past two years, but here we stand!

Praise God! Praise God that we are bound together with cords of love that cannot be broken. Those bonds of love caused us to get creative! We learn to use Zoom and YouTube.

We adapted. Instead of the traditional Anniversary and Christmas Eve services, we praised and paraded in the parking lot. Drive by parades became the new "go to's" to say congratulations and to bid fond farewells. Though it was regrettable that over 20 years of summer camping was disrupted, and had to be postponed for two summers, Sherry Graham-- with a faith similar to Abraham and Sarah's--- in 2021 booked Springwater for this coming June.

Whenever new Covid rules came down, we chose to co-operate to keep folks safe.

Whenever the rules let up, we did what we could to resume some normalcy. It's been wonderful to have a couple of Ladies Aid Meetings. And finally, the Knotty Quilters are now quilting in Oak hall! Yes, Covid is still waving at us but vaccines, masks, meds and our ability to adapt give us hope---

Hope for an end to this virulent virus.

Hope to share anniversaries, thanksgivings, Christmases together with family and friends.

Hope for a summer that is ahead of us will feel more normal than last summer.

And so we hope for a new beginning to slowly unfold--- the proof of which is that we're praising God inside the church on this holiest of days!

And it's not just the choir who is singing the hymns—

And it's not Maundy Thursday evening—

And we shared breakfast this morning and we could plan an Easter Egg hunt and the preacher isn't in her office or on her sofa preaching at a phone!

These are some signs that the new beginning has begun!

God is good!

Can I get an Alleluia?

Well, more changes lie ahead of us to be sure. Some changes we are aware of, like your pastor making her timely transition from the pulpit to the pew. And as our church prayerfully plans for future ministries, other changes will happen as members take on new roles—and as decisions are made about which ministries remain or require tweaking. The next pastor will bring a new presence, a new personality and a fresh perspective. It will be a new thing for me and for you to be pastored by someone else. I'll pray for you and you'll pray for me, and together we'll pray for the he or she who steps into this circle of faith after me.

Can I hear another amen?

I'm not sure, even as I say this, that I believe that this is my last Easter sermon as your pastor. Whenever reality sinks in, whether it's today or May 8 or October 1, amid any feelings of sadness or boredom---will be a sense of gratitude. As my mother often remarked "Margie the good Lord surely set you down in a beautiful part of the country."

She was right, as she usually was. And she truly appreciated you and how you cared about me and for me and about her, too.

And so, as with you, I stand just a few metres from the finish line, and mark the end of my 'official' pastoral position, I want to say, "Thank you."

Thank you for keeping your covenant promises first made with me before God 32 years ago. And I want to celebrate with you the One whose love binds us together---

We celebrate the One, who on Easter Day transformed the worst possible ending into the most glorious new beginning.

Folks, we are Easter people! You are hearers of the good news that a young man, according to Mark's gospel, spoke to startled women who arrived at the tomb just after dawn. "Do not be alarmed. He is not here. He has been raised."

And you are bearers of the good news that the risen Jesus told Mary Magdalene to share with his brothers. "I have seen the Lord!"

And you are witnesses of the good news that sounded within your own spirit when in some lush garden or barren wilderness Jesus spoke your name and you answered "Here I am, Lord"

And ever since, through whatever ending and beginning you have met, managed and maneuvered, you have never, ever been alone.

And whatever kind word you've spoken

or good deed that you've offered,

whatever gesture of grace you've given

or righteous stand that you've taken---

whatever offering of self-less love is poured out from your caring hearts—

then Jesus, whom God glorified by raising him

is glorified again and again whenever you choose to imitate him.

And speaking as your pastor--- I've witnessed Jesus glorified countless times through the warm caring and joyous, *joyous* ministry of this community of faith.

And whenever endings come—whether unwelcome or welcome— God's Easter people will rise up with faith to anticipate a new beginning. We will rise up to serve, adapt, struggle, laugh, weep, pray, praise, share deeds of love and speak words of grace-- because Jesus is alive—

Because Jesus spoke our names.

Can I get an alleluia?

Amen!