



**Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge of the United Church
At Home Worship
April 26, 2020 Third Sunday of the Easter Season
Minister: Rev. Tammy Allan**



We gratefully acknowledge that we are on the ancient and traditional lands of The Blackfoot Nation, the people of the Treaty 7, and of Metis Region 3. May we cherish and care for the land and the people, as those who came before us did.

Your Worship Space

As you worship at home, try to create a space for that. It could be as simple as lighting a candle (either flame or battery); or placing a small cross or a symbol that has meaning for you in front of you. If you are alone, perhaps start a journal, as you reflect on the worship experience. Or, perhaps call a friend and share this time with them over the phone. If you are with one or two others, enjoy the conversation that arises...as you practise safe distancing. ☺

Opening Prayer

As we set aside this time to worship, we bring our troubles and our fears. May this time be like the Emmaus road was for Jesus' friends. May it be the place where we meet the Risen One, and where hope is born anew. In faith, let us proclaim that Christ has risen!. Hallelujah! Amen.

Hymn –Christ is Alive Click on the link below to hear
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D164VLOTIdI>

An Gospel Reading

Luke 24:13-35

¹³Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" ¹⁹He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But 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. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." ²⁵Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then

enter into his glory?" ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. ²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.



A Message for Today

I have always loved this story. For me it has been a reminder that encounters with the holy happen in surprising and unexpected ways. Two disciples, the story tells us, one was named Cleopas. The other was not named. Notice how the picture above shows men walking along the road. I guess I've always been taught about this story as if it were two men on the road, joined by another. Or maybe I just assumed that.

The Season's of the Spirit commentary suggests that perhaps it was Cleopas and his wife that may have had that surprise encounter with Jesus. And there is some logic to that, as they invite the stranger to stay with them, likely in their home, and they offer him a meal. Sounds like something a woman would do, especially in that time where roles were pretty clearly defined. It was during that meal that the two disciples, Cleopas and his companion, came to recognize Jesus. It was in that act of breaking bread with him, that they were able to see and know him, to know the presence of the divine with them.

The breaking of the bread...bread is one of those staples of our lives. Every culture has some form of bread, some form that feeds both body and soul. Breaking of bread...part of one of the central rituals of our Christian tradition.

I can't help but remember being in my Nanny's kitchen as warm bread emerged from the oven...we could hardly wait for it to cool enough to be sliced. As soon as it was, on would go fresh churned butter, melt in your mouth goodness. The aroma, the taste, it was a wonderful thing, a sacred thing. As we gathered, at her table, it was a form of family communion.

Have you noticed that in this time of COVID 19, yeast and flour are things that are hard to find in our communities. Is it because as we struggle with the confines of social distancing, and the stress of knowing we are living in a time of global pandemic that we seek to create things that bring us comfort and peace? Is bread-making one of those things? In our search for comfort, for a sense of times of love, we turn to things that elicit memories of happier times, of more simple times. Making bread, savouring it's goodness, might be a way to find a simpler time.

We are living through things we have never experienced before, and that creates stress and tension. COVID 19, and then the events of this past weekend in Nova Scotia, have given us cause to feel stress, anxiety, and loss. I have shed tears for the people affected by the tragic events in that province. The unthinkable happened. If it happened there, it could happen here. That is the reality that we must grapple with.

Where do we find hope? Where do we see Jesus, when we can't reach out and hold one another in love, as we struggle to find meaning in these days? It's okay to be sad. It's okay to feel lost. We are in the midst of unknown territory, trying to find our way.

Again, I think of Mr. Rogers, who would tell his child viewers to look for the helpers. In the midst of the challenges we are living with, we may not be able to hug those who are hurting, but we can reach out with prayers. We can hold close those we are residing with, and share in conversations that matter with loved ones over telephone or video chatting. We can support agencies and groups that are helping others in ways that are possible during this time of pandemic.

When you are hurting, or lost, or afraid, reach out. Find a helper. That may be a family member or a friend, that may be a doctor, or mental health counsellor, that may be me, your minister. I am here, I can listen. There are others that can do that, too.

I heard today a saying I first heard many years ago, after experiencing a traumatic event, personally. I first heard it said to me by a friend from Nova Scotia, as we held each other in support through that trauma 17 years ago. Today I heard it by someone on CBC radio, speaking

of the mass shooting last week. The saying applies so well to how many of us are feeling in these days. It is this: When you share a sorrow, it is cut in half. When you share a joy, it is doubled.

Those Emmaus travelers were doing that. Walking along, sharing their sorrows, over the loss of their friend and guide, Jesus. And when they came to know him in the breaking of the bread, they went and shared their joy with others. Sorrows shared, decreased. Joy shared, multiplied.

In these days, reach out, share your sorrows. Share what is causing you to be afraid, or sad, or unsettled. There are people who will listen. There are people who understand, as we're all walking this path together. We are not alone. Christ walks with us.

When it is time, we will be able to share joy too. Even now, as we linger in these challenging times, there are moments where joy is shining through...in the sunshine, in the crocuses peaking out of the ground, in quiet times of rest, in conversations with those we love. In each moment of joy, there is hope that more will come. Thanks be to God.

Hymn

Music has been one of the things that has helped me spiritually, throughout my life, and certainly in these times of COVID 19. Especially this week, music from the Maritimes has touched me deeply. This piece of music speaks of resiliency, hope, and love, and is sung by Canadians, some still with us, some gone on to their greater glory.

We Rise Again

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dkwj1hppsrs>

Prayers for this day

This prayer is adapted from Season's of the Spirit, SeasonsFUSION Lent-Easter 2020. During these times of distancing, Season's has granted permission to use their resources in this manner.

After each stanza, take a moment or two to reflect.

Bread for all, bread in all, we pray, O God:

When we are orphaned, hungry, oppressed...(silence)

Faith for all, faith in all, we pray, O God:

To recognize faith in other ways, other texts, and other worshipping communities. (silence)

Grace for all, grace in all, we pray, O God:

When we are estranged, alienated, isolated. (silence)

Wisdom for all, wisdom in all, we pray, O God:
When we are disabled, neglected, impoverished. (silence)
Spirit for all, Spirit in all, we pray, O God:
For Earth, our children, and a shared, common future. Amen.

A Blessing for Today

Giver of life, in the same way bread is broken and shared for the benefit of all, may the giftedness we each share be a breaking open of abundant love to the world.
May we all live to be a blessing, today and always. Amen.



*Thank you so much for using this worship resource! Feel free to share it!
We are grateful for your connection to the Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge, and to both Olds and Sundre United Churches. As the time of COVID 19 distancing progresses, know that we are still the United Church in our communities, striving to serve you and the community. Our ability to do that requires financial support, and we invite you to prayerfully consider making an Easter offering to either Olds United or Sundre United. If you already give to the church with PAR (Pre-Authorized Giving) things will carry on as usual. If you give through envelopes, it would be greatly appreciated if you would mail your offering in, or bring it to the office, however please call first to confirm someone is there, as in these days our staff must be cautious as well. And finally, if you are not a regular giver, but wish to support our ministries, we would gratefully accept your gift.*

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Here is a link to some on-line worship opportunities in the Chinook Winds Region.

<https://chinookwindsregion.ca/2020/03/16/online-worship-opportunities/>