

## Moderator's Online Worship - Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020

### Order of Worship

#### **Welcome and Announcements**

A warm welcome to each and every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ.

My name is Richard Bott – whether you are able to participate in the live version of this worship service, or are taking part at a later time – I am very glad that we've been able to join, in this space, to worship together.

I'd like to thank both Bruce Harding and Jason Locke for offering their gifts of music leadership, today.

We are greatly blessed by your presence, and by your willingness to share your music with us.

This is being offered as a support to our communities of faith during the time it is difficult for people to meet together because of Covid-19. This worship time is being recorded, and will be shared through The United Church of Canada website, in high-resolution, low-resolution, audio, and text formats – because we realize that not everyone has access to high speed internet.

And, again, welcome, beloved children of God!

#### **Acknowledgement of Territory**

As we gather today, I would like to ask us to take a moment to connect where we are to this virtual space that we're in. I ask you to take a moment to recognize the space you are in, and even more than that, to recognize the land upon which that space sits. For 10,000 years and more, there have been people living on this land, not just being responsible for this land, but being an integral part of it. This is the traditional territory – and, in many places in which we live, unceded territory – of the various Indigenous peoples of this land. Those of us who are settlers, descendants of settlers, and newcomers, need to acknowledge that reality; give thanks for the Indigenous peoples care for this land, past and present; for the fact that we are able to worship the Divine on it. We celebrate all of the Indigenous peoples of this land, and remember today the Elders and others who continue to be deeply devoted to their faith and relationship with the Creator, and those who are part of The United Church of Canada.

In this time, it is important for all of us to recognize that we continue to live in broken relationship. This is a moment to recommit ourselves to working for right-relations each and every day. That is what a territorial acknowledgement is about – more than just pretty words – commitment to working for right relations.

So, today, I join this virtual space, from Port Coquitlam, British Columbia – on the traditional, and unceded, territory of the Katzie, the Kwikwetlem, and the Sto:lo peoples. If you know the peoples of the land upon which you connect to this space, take a moment to reflect and give thanks, where you are. If you don't know, when worship is done, consider going to [native-land.ca](http://native-land.ca), typing in the name of your community, and learning a bit more.

[BREAK for people to give thanks in their own spaces]

Thank you. May God bless this reminder, and help us to be people of truth and right-relations.

### **Lighting the Christ Candle**

It was dark when the women arose,  
when they gathered the things of remembrance,  
to prepare his body – the perfumes, the oils.  
It was dark as they walked to the tomb,  
the night was still around them,  
wrapping them, in their grief.  
it was dark when they looked inside...  
and then...

[Richard lights the candle]

They heard the truth.

**One: Christ is risen!**

All: Christ is risen, indeed!

One: Alleluia!

**All: Alleluia, amen!**

### **Call to Worship (Sung):**

Alle, alle, alleluia!

Alle, alle, alleluia!

Alle, alle, allelu, alle, alleluia!

Alle, alle, allelu, alle, alleluia!

("Alleluia (Uruguay)")

Music: Traditional melody, Uruguay, public domain.

Can be found at More Voices #52)

### **Opening Prayer:**

One:

You are with creation, God.

In life – alleluia.

In death – alleluia!

In life-beyond-death – ALLELUIA!

ALL:

In the brokenness and in the joy,  
in the lonely moments of deepest night,  
in the hope that comes just before dawn,  
your infinite love overwhelms death –  
and resurrection changes everything.  
ALLELUIA!

As we reach out to each other,  
from inside the boxes we find ourselves;  
know that we are reaching out to you,  
knowing that you are always reaching out to us.

As we reach out to each other,  
help us to reach into your world,  
that we might be people of the Resurrection,  
seeing the risen Christ in every grace-filled moment,  
every day of our lives. ALLELUIA! Amen.

**Hymn:**

Christ the Lord is risen today, Hallelujah!  
all creation join to say; Hallelujah!  
raise your joys and triumphs high; Hallelujah!  
sing, O heavens, and earth reply: Hallelujah!

Love's redeeming work is done, Hallelujah!  
fought the fight, the battle won. Hallelujah!  
Lo, our sun's eclipse is o'er! Hallelujah!  
Lo, he dwells in death no more! Hallelujah!

Lives again our glorious King: Hallelujah!  
where, O death, is now your sting? Hallelujah!  
Once he died, our souls to save: Hallelujah!  
where your victory, O grave? Hallelujah!

Hail, the Lord of earth and heaven, Hallelujah!  
praise to you by both be given! Hallelujah!  
Every knee to you shall bow, Hallelujah!  
risen Christ, triumphant now. Hallelujah!

("Christ the Lord is risen today"  
Words: Charles Wesley, 1739, public domain.  
Music: Lyra Davidica, 1708, public domain.  
Can be found at Voices United #157/155)

**Scripture:**

Jeremiah 31:1-6

At that time, says Adonai, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.  
Thus says our God:  
The people who survived the sword  
found grace in the wilderness;  
when Israel sought for rest,  
God appeared to him from far away.

I have loved you with an everlasting love;  
therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.  
Again I will build you, and you shall be built,  
O virgin Israel!  
Again you shall take your tambourines,  
and go forth in the dance of the merry-makers.  
Again you shall plant vineyards  
on the mountains of Samaria;  
the planters shall plant,  
and shall enjoy the fruit.  
For there shall be a day when sentinels will call  
in the hill country of Ephraim:  
'Come, let us go up to Zion,  
to the Lord our God.'

John 20:1-18

**Reflection on Scripture in Word (Richard Bott):**

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. So 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.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and 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. They 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.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus 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.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus 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."' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Blessed Easter.

I've got to say - this is one of the strangest Easters that I have experienced in my life.

I remember Easters when I was a kid - extended family coming to visit! My cousins and Aunt and Uncle coming from Sault Saint Marie, and my Great Aunt and Uncle coming from Thunder Bay, having an Easter egg hunt in the house with seven kids all searching through the house. I remember being a teenager, going to church for Easter morning celebrations and then coming home, my grandparents coming for Easter dinner. I remember as a new minister, deciding that not only was I going to be part of the congregation's Easter Sunrise Service at 6 a.m., I was also going to continue the tradition that I had of keeping vigil over Easter Saturday night. And I remember, therefor, not waking up in time for Easter Sunrise Service.

I remember being part of worship celebrations with our Anglican sibs and getting to hold the huge Paschal candle outside of the church, lighting the candle, entering the church and singing, "The Light of Christ. Thanks be to God!"

But now?

I'm in my condo.

I've been in my condo for about 3 weeks, not going any further than my balcony. I'm one of those people that has "underlying health conditions" that covid-19 could be a problem for, so I've been self-isolating to be really careful.

It feels really strange to not be with my Community of Faith in a physical kind of way. It feels really strange to know that I'm in my own Upper Room.

Waiting for... something.

In some ways this time of isolation has been helping me to understand, just a little bit more, of what it would have been like for Jesus' disciples, in those first days after the crucifixion. At that time the "inner circle" of disciples were gathered in their Upper Room, not being sure of what was going to happen next. Perhaps wondering, in their case, if the authorities were going to be banging on their door. (Not something we worry about here in the same way.)

And grieving. Grieving things that had changed so suddenly. Things didn't make sense. They were chaotic. Confused.

And yet into that moment, the women got up and pulled together the practical things, because there was something needed to be done. The women left that Upper Room and went to the tomb where Jesus body had been placed. In doing so, they became the first evangelists of the resurrection of Jesus. Mary, from Magdala, was the first of Jesus' disciples, in this narrative, to meet the Risen Christ. She was the first person to tell that his rest of the disciples, "I have seen the Lord."

One of the things that is very interesting for me is that the Resurrection had happened while everyone was still in the Upper Room. Easter had come, and no one knew about it. No one knew about it - until they went out and met the Risen Christ.

We aren't in a place in time where we can go out, yet, and, still, Easter has happened. In fact, I believe Easter is happening. The resurrection isn't just an instance that happens two thousand plus years ago.

The resurrection is a moment that exists from that time forward and that time backward - is in all places and all times. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is now.

The Resurrection - that moment where God's love overcame death, where God's love brought new life out of something that should not have life - is now.

That Resurrection is in every moment.

It is in those moments of joy and celebration when we go hunting for Easter eggs, or when we gather with our community and sing, "Jesus Christ is risen today, '"; and the moment of Resurrection is also in the difficult moments - the moments of loss and the moments of pain. That Resurrection moment is happening at bedsides, when someone is dying and preparing to enter into God's household in a way that we can only begin to imagine. That Resurrection moment is happening when people stand in the face of racism and sexism and homophobia and ableism, and classism, and when people knock on their neighbor's doors and make sure that they have enough to eat.

The Resurrection happens in every moment, calling us to be people of life, and new life, and miraculous life - here in our virtual spaces, In the relationships we have one with another, and in the relationships we have with all creation.

We are people of the Resurrection. There is nothing that can separate us from that.

Ever.

So sibs, in this moment and in the moments to come, let us live as a Resurrection people. Let us live the reality, not only that hope is coming, but that hope lives now. Let's live Easter in every moment of our lives.

Let's look for the Risen Christ - because we know the Risen Christ is right here.

I'm not going to say Happy Easter, because Easter isn't always happy.  
But I'll wish you a Blessed Easter. Blessed by the Resurrection here, and now.

Blessed Easter to you all.

Amen and Amen!

### **Musical Reflection on Scripture**

Jesus, your spirit in us  
is a wellspring of life everlasting.

("Jesus, your spirit in us"

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Can be found at More Voices #102)

### **Gathering our Offerings**

Take a moment to think about the gifts that God has placed in you.  
What is one way that you could use those gifts to love God, to love your neighbour, to love yourself in the coming week?

If you would like to help your congregation during this rather tumultuous time, but you aren't sure how, be in contact with your minister or the treasurer of your community of faith. As well, every congregation of The United Church of Canada is registered at [canadahelps.org](http://canadahelps.org). You can make an electronic donation, though them, if you would like.

I'd invite you to take a moment to offer to God the gifts in your heart – the actions of care, the resources that can help your neighbours and the world, as we sing together.

**Sung Blessing:**

For all your goodness, God,  
we give you thanks.

Thanks for the food we eat,  
and for the friends we meet;  
for each new day we greet,  
we give you thanks.

("For All Your Goodness, God")

Words: traditional American Music: traditional German

In the Public Domain - we give thanks for this gift of song.

Can be found at [Voices United #549](#))

**Prayer over the Offering:**

We do give you thanks, God of all creation,  
for the gifts in our hands, and the gifts in our hearts,  
help us to use all that we have  
to share your life, in all of its abundance,  
everywhere in your world. Amen.

**Hymn:**

Tuya es la gloria  
la honra también;  
tuya para siempre. Amen. Amen.

We sing of your glory,  
we praise you again,  
for you are eternal. Amen. Amen.

Tuyos los dominios,  
los tronos también;  
tuyos para siempre. Amen. Amen.

We sing of your power  
and honour again,

for you are eternal. Amen. Amen.

A ti yo me rindo, te adoro también;  
amor absoluto. Amen. Amen.

We sing of surrender  
to you, God, again.  
your love is eternal.  
Amen. Amen.

Gloria en las alturas  
y en la tierra también;  
gloria, alleluya. Amen. Amen.

Glory in the highest;  
on earth, sing again.  
Glory, alleluia. Amen. Amen.

("Tuya es la gloria/We sing of your glory")

Words (Spanish) and music: Traditional song, Latin America. Public domain.

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Can be found at More Voices #58)

### **Prayers of the People and Blessing**

Let us go in peace and in all that we do,  
let us do it for love, and by the power of the Holy Spirit.  
And let us always remember – we never alone!  
The peace of Christ holds us all creation.  
The love of the Creator enfolds all that has been, all that is, and all that will be.  
And the wings of the Holy Spirit carry it –  
in the moments of grief, and in the celebration of life made new –  
now, and always. Amen?  
Amen!

### **Announcements:**

Again, I'd like to thank Bruce Harding and Jason Locke for sharing their music with us today! And I like to thank Susan Hutton for sharing in scripture.

I'd invite you to type in any words of blessing and hope that you might want to offer, before you sign off.

We'll be back, next week, at this same time.

And don't forget – there will be an Easter Communion service this coming Sunday – noon PDT, 3pm EDT,  
4.30pm NDT.

Thank you for worshipping together, today.



Let us go in peace, to love and to serve.  
Thanks be to God!