

# SA, SL, TS and DSM United Churches

*Third Sunday of Easter – April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024*

**Prelude:** – Christie Coatsworth

## **Welcome & Announcements:**

Good morning!

Thank you for your support of all our services, which are posted on our websites - [Southbuxton.ca](http://Southbuxton.ca) and [Talbotstreet.ca](http://Talbotstreet.ca) .

Thank you to Christie Coatsworth for our music this morning. Thank you to Tracey Major for putting together the Power Point slides.

## **Lighting of the Christ Candle:**

### **Call to Worship:**

**Eric:** God of the morning is with us as we gather with songs of praise.

**People:** Here we find respite from a busy, frenetic world.

**Eric:** We gather in this place finding the peace that God offers.

**People:** We are more at home within ourselves when we find our rest in Christ.

**Eric:** We are witnesses to God's glory, steadfast love, and faithfulness.

**People:** We see the beauty of creation and sing praises of joy!

**Eric:** We abide in God's love and keep God's commandments.

**People:** Today, we awaken to the call, and show up fully to love one another.

**Eric:** Come, let us worship.

### **Opening Hymn: VU 395 "Come In, Come In and Sit Down"**

*Come in, come in and sit down,  
you are a part of the family.*

*We are lost and we are found,  
and we are a part of the family.*

You know the reason why you came,  
yet no reason can explain;  
so share in the laughter and cry in the pain,  
for we are a part of the family.

*Come in, come in and sit down,  
you are a part of the family.*

*We are lost and we are found,  
and we are a part of the family.*

God is with us in this place,  
like a mother's warm embrace.

We're all forgiven by God's grace,  
for we are a part of the family.

*Come in, come in and sit down,  
you are a part of the family.  
We are lost and we are found,  
and we are a part of the family.*

There's life to be shared in the bread and the wine;  
we are the branches, Christ is the vine.  
This is God's temple, it's not yours or mine,  
but we are a part of the family.

*Come in, come in and sit down,  
you are a part of the family.  
We are lost and we are found,  
and we are a part of the family.*

There's rest for the weary and health for us all;  
there's a yoke that is easy, and a burden that's small.  
So come in and worship and answer the call,  
for we are a part of the family.

*Come in, come in and sit down,  
you are a part of the family.  
We are lost and we are found,  
and we are a part of the family.*

### **Opening Prayer:**

**God of light and life, we gather as witnesses to your abundant love. We are amazed to discover you anew through our prayers, our praise, and our offerings. God, you encourage us amidst our daily living to become stewards of your love and grace. We ask you to be here with us as we witness your love made real through Jesus the Christ. Amen.**

### **Children's Story:**

#### **Children's Hymn: "Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam"**

Jesus wants me for a sunbeam, to shine for him each day;  
In every way try to please him, at home, at school, at play.  
*A sunbeam, a sunbeam, Jesus wants me for a sunbeam,  
A sunbeam, a sunbeam, I'll be a sunbeam for Him.*

I will ask Jesus to help me, to keep my heart from sin;  
Ever reflecting His goodness, and always shine for Him.  
*A sunbeam, a sunbeam, Jesus wants me for a sunbeam,  
A sunbeam, a sunbeam, I'll be a sunbeam for Him.*

I'll be a sunbeam for Jesus, I can if I but try,

Serving Him moment by moment, then live with Him on high.  
*A sunbeam, a sunbeam, Jesus wants me for a sunbeam,  
A sunbeam, a sunbeam, I'll be a sunbeam for Him.*

### **Responsive Psalm: Psalm 4**

#### ***An Evening Prayer***

You are my God and protector. Please answer my prayer. I was in terrible distress, but you set me free. Now have pity and listen as I pray.

**How long will you people refuse to respect me? You love foolish things, and you run after what is worthless.**

The Lord has chosen everyone who is faithful to be his very own, and he answers my prayers.

**But each of you had better tremble and turn from your sins. Silently search your heart as you lie in bed.**

Offer the proper sacrifices and trust the Lord.

**There are some who ask, "Who will be good to us?" Let your kindness, Lord, shine brightly on us.**

You brought me more happiness than a rich harvest of grain and grapes.

**I can lie down and sleep soundly because you, Lord, will keep me safe.**

### **Gospel Scripture: Luke 24: 36 - 48**

#### ***What Jesus' Followers Must Do***

**While Jesus' disciples were talking about what had happened, Jesus appeared and greeted them. They were frightened and terrified because they thought they were seeing a ghost. But Jesus said, "Why are you so frightened? Why do you doubt? Look at my hands and my feet and see who I am! Touch me and find out for yourselves. Ghosts don't have flesh and bones as you see I have." After Jesus said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. The disciples were so glad and amazed that they could not believe it. Jesus then asked them, "Do you have something to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish. He took it and ate it as they watched. Jesus said to them, "While I was still with you, I told you that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Books of the Prophets, and in the Psalms had to happen." Then he helped them understand the Scriptures. He told them: The Scriptures say that the Messiah must suffer, then three days later he will rise from death. They also say that all people of every nation must be told in my name to turn to God, in order to be forgiven. So beginning in Jerusalem, you must tell everything that has happened.**

### **Message: "We Are Witnesses"**

We are all witnesses to the Risen Christ. Today's story is about another time that the disciples see Jesus. In this case, the disciples see Jesus and do not recognize him. Jesus has been seen by two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They run back to Jerusalem to tell the eleven who are still self isolating in the Upper Room. As the disciples are trying to make out what this all means, Jesus appears before them. We are told, "They are frightened and terrified, because they thought they were seeing a ghost."

To be a witness, it seems, is to exist in complex tensions; of doubt and evidence, of astonishment and faith, of terror and peace, of disbelief and joy, of distress and hope, of who we are and who we could be. The disciples in the Gospel stories are

experiencing all of these tensions of emotion. They have an encounter with God that transforms them and compels them to act. Same goes for us today.

Many people in our modern world cannot even imagine seeing someone come back to life from death. Many cannot imagine encountering God – especially in a way that transforms them and compels them to act – like they have seen God. Even we Christians at times, can only stare, mouths gaping and knees trembling, at the sight of God’s miraculous presence. We too, like the disciples, stand in disbelief.

Like the disciples in Luke, we too are invited to “touch and see” Jesus. Jesus says, “Why are you so frightened? Why do you doubt? Look at my hands and feet and see who I am. Touch me and find out for yourselves. Ghosts don’t have flesh and bones as you see I have.” These words are for us today, as they were for the disciples and all of Jesus’ followers - right up to us today.

Cleopas and his companion encountered Jesus on the Emmaus road. They run back to share with the eleven disciples plus their companions, who are gathered. They listen to the story of these men meeting and sharing a meal with Jesus.

Last week, John shared with us the story of Thomas doubting the story of the disciples. In Luke, all of the disciples are in the position of Thomas. They are hearing another’s account of meeting the Risen Jesus and are not able to overcome their doubt without the evidence of sight and touch. Yet so far, we have heard Mary’s story, and Thomas story and now the fallout from the Emmaus Story. In all these stories, we encounter people who find it hard to believe until they see for themselves.

It’s no difference today. We as those who have met the Risen Christ share our story with others and they do not truly believe until they too meet the Risen Christ. Our job is to witness our experiences – God will look after the rest. To be a witness is to respond to the call of God. We may not be perfect, but we have been forgiven, therefore we have the power to forgive others. Our job is to share God’s complete forgiveness as it is offered to all.

In the United Church we do not share our witnessing stories in each weekly service. Yet we may share in conversation, or in weekly faith talks or other times of opportunity. Even sharing our personal witness story can cause us tension – will the one we are sharing with accept our evidence or will they doubt? How might we help them to accept that tension and work towards a resolution? In belief, let us trust God will look after the details.

Can we doubt and still be a witness? I think so. I believe we do that in our Faith Talks when we share our idea and another person builds on that and another etc. If we couldn't share when we have doubts, we'd be locked in fear. Courage is moving ahead with your fear.

During these weeks of Easter, we are reminded again and again of the joy surrounding the witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. Before that joy is fully realized, the disciples are stuck in their experiences of grief. Last week we shared how Jesus' voice influenced Thomas and Mary – that once hearing Jesus' voice they believed. The disciples on the Road to Emmaus heard Jesus' voice, but didn't recognize Jesus. Yet they did recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

We may never know how we are going to recognize Jesus, until we recognize Jesus. We too may need to move from that which is holding us back from believing, to believing in faith. Part of our faith is built upon the words we have heard today – words of scripture that share the stories of grief - resurrecting into shouts of joy.

We each bear our grief, our struggles, and our own mistakes. We are called to examine our hearts and lives and move into a place of forgiveness. The Easter story becomes our witness story, to share our journey from grief into joy. We are called to turn toward the Risen Christ with open arms and open spirits, welcoming the good news! Christ is alive. Christ is risen. We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

### **Reflection Hymn: VU 409 "Morning Has Broken"**

Morning has broken like the first morning,  
blackbird has spoken like the first bird.  
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!  
Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!

Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from heaven,  
like the first dewfall on the first grass.  
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,  
sprung in completeness where God's feet pass.

Ours is the sunlight! Ours is the morning  
born of the one light Eden saw play!  
Praise with elation, praise every morning,  
God's recreation of the new day!

### **Invitation to Share Our Gifts:**

**Eric:** We are here to offer a portion from our abundance – our time, our energy, our resources. May we begin with gratitude, giving thanks to God who is steadfast in love and faithful. Let us give in love!

**Offertory: VU 540 “Grant Us, God, the Grace of Giving”**

Grant us, God, the grace of giving,  
with a spirit large and free,  
that ourselves and all our living  
we may offer faithfully.

**Offertory Prayer:**

**People: God, we give you our thanks for all that we have and all we are. May the tithes, gifts, and offerings we bring be of healing service to our hurting world. May our collective offering be an expression of love and healing through the risen Christ. Amen.**

**Chorus to Prayer: VU 665 “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour”**

Pass me not, O gentle Saviour, hear my humble cry;  
while on others thou art calling, do not pass me by.  
Saviour, Saviour, hear my humble cry;  
while on others thou art calling, do not pass me by.

**Pastoral Prayer:**

**Closing Hymn: VU 602 “Blest is the Tie That Binds”**

Blest be the tie that binds  
our hearts in Christian love;  
the unity of heart and mind  
is like to that above.

Before our Maker's throne  
we pour our ardent prayers;  
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,  
our comforts and our cares.

We share each other's woes,  
each other's burdens bear;  
and often for each other flows  
the sympathizing tear.

This glorious hope revives  
our courage on the way;  
that we shall live in perfect love  
in God's eternal day.

**Blessing:**

**Eric:** As we go, proclaim God's message of justice, grace and love. Go to love deeply and show great care. Go in peace and love, now and forever more.

**Closing Chorus: “Go Now In Peace”**

Go now in peace, never be afraid.  
God will go with you each hour of ev'ry day.  
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.  
Know He will guide you in all you do.

Go now in love, and show you believe.  
Reach out to others, so all the world can see.  
God will be there, watching from above.  
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.  
Amen, Amen, Amen.

**Postlude: – Christie Coatsworth**