

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

Fourth Sunday of Easter – April 30th, 2023

Prelude: by Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Thank you for your support of all our past services, which are posted on our websites - Southbuxton.ca and Talbotstreet.ca

Lighting of the Christ Candle:

Call to Worship:

Eric: We are different people;

People: each one of us unique.

Eric: We look different, sound different,

People: think different thoughts,

Eric: hold different opinions,

People: feel different emotions.

Eric: God gathers us all together – with all our differences, quirks, all our gifts and challenges

People: to break bread, sing songs, open our hearts to prayer and share in devotion to the One who unites and transforms us.

Eric: Let us gather to worship.

Opening Hymn: VU 232 “Joyful, Joyful We Adore You”

Joyful, joyful we adore you,
God of glory, life and love;
hearts unfold like flowers before you,
opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,
drive the gloom of doubt away;
giver of immortal gladness,
fill us with the light of day.

All your works with joy surround you,
earth and heaven reflect your rays,
stars and angels sing around you,
centre of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
flowery meadow, flashing sea,
chanting bird and flowing fountain,
sound their praise eternally.

You are giving and forgiving,

ever blessing, ever blest,
wellspring of the joy of living,
ocean depth of happy rest!
Source of grace and fount of blessing,
let your light upon us shine;
teach us how to love each other,
lift us to the joy divine.

Mortals join the mighty chorus
which the morning stars began;
God's own love is reigning o'er us,
joining people hand in hand.
Ever singing, march we onward,
victors in the midst of strife;
joyful music leads us sunward
in the triumph song of life. **

Opening Prayer:

People: O God, you came to the disciples and offered them Easter assurance. You came to Thomas and offered him resurrection hope. Come to us in this time of worship. Help us to discern the future for your church, here in this place. Fill us with hope, faith and love. In the name of the resurrected Christ, we pray. Amen.

Children's Story & Lord's Prayer:

Children's Hymn: VU 477 "I Come With Joy"

I come with joy, a child of God,
forgiven, loved and free,
the life of Jesus to recall
in love laid down for me,
in love laid down for me.

I come with Christians far and near
to find, as all are fed,
the new community of love
in Christ's communion bread,
in Christ's communion bread.

As Christ breaks bread, and bids us share,
each proud division ends.
The love that made us, makes us one,
and strangers now are friends,
and strangers now are friends.

The Spirit of the risen Christ,

unseen, but ever near,
is in such friendship better known,
alive among us here,
alive among us here.

Together met, together bound
by all that God has done,
we'll go with joy, to give the world
the love that makes us one,
the love that makes us one. **

Scripture: Acts 2: 42 - 47

They spent their time learning from the apostles, and they were like family to each other. They also broke bread and prayed together. Everyone was amazed by the many miracles and wonders that the apostles worked. All the Lord's followers often met together, and they shared everything they had. They would sell their property and possessions and give the money to whoever was in need. Day after day they met together in the temple. They broke bread together in different homes and shared their food happily and freely, while praising God. Everyone liked them, and each day the Lord added to their group others who were being saved.

Reflection: "Sensing God's Call for the Local Church"

The last few weeks we have been sharing Easter, using different stories. We go from the joy of Easter back into our ordinary day to day life. We have been sharing those Easter stories in ways that we might see them as part of our day to day lives. May we see a sense of awe and wonder in our day-to-day existence.

In today's short story in Acts, we glimpse the early church in its heyday. Folks are gathering, sharing what they have with each other. At this point the early church was trying to be the ideal that we think church should be. Some of the ability to be the church may have been the thought that Jesus' return was going to happen any day now. Yet, again life takes over. As life goes on, the early church experiences internal conflicts, persecution, and inter-faith tensions. The early church is being challenged by the wider community in ways that will define and refine it.

This story in Acts immediately follows Peter's Pentecost message. The early church responds in faith to Peter's Pentecost address. The folks of the early church were being baptized and joining with each other to grow the early Christian community. "They" were eagerly awaiting Christ's return in glory with the passion of recent converts embracing a new way of life. The focus on Peter's preaching reminds us that Peter was the first leader of the early church before the conversion and subsequent influence of Paul.

We can get a sense of awe and reverence as we reflect on the mood of that early church. That is how we would like our church to feel. Yet we may also associate those feelings with our response to the mystery of a God, which we find far beyond us in understanding. Yet we marvel at the “wonders and signs”; which are tangible, yet practical changes to daily life that can made a big difference in our community.

In these few short verses we see the church’s unity, which is emphasized. That’s the point - it’s the early church which finds itself in an exciting and growing stage – working together for the glory of God. Today as we reflect on our faith journey and our church, we think back to the times when we were excited about our faith and the work the church is accomplishing.

We in the church today may have many of these things in common. Though many times, we are looking through those Rose-coloured glasses of yester year. We remember how great things were here when we were kids. We remember how our parents and grandparents came to Sunday School with us and we all stayed for church. We remember the wonderful potlucks, the Sunday School picnics, the plays, the cantatas, the music, the wonderful preachers, and the list can go on. Many couples who were married 40 or 50 years ago, met at Youth Group, or in other organized groups. Church Baseball teams were great times of fun, skill and fellowship. We enjoyed the grace of all the people at our church.

The early Jesus followers enjoyed the “grace of all the people”. One person reaches out to help another. Neighbours worshipped together at the local church and then worked together during the week, trusting each other will get a fair share of the bartering. Perhaps such feelings of goodwill or grace made it easier for the Body of Christ in that place to make God’s grace known to their neighbours. Their words of praise and deeds of mercy testify to the abundance and wholeness found in their shared devotion. The neighbours took notice, especially if they needed help or companionship in their daily life.

Is it really all that much different today? The church reaches out into the community to help those who have fallen through the cracks. Today we have a shared social safety net for many of those places where the church might have first reached out. Yet in our own history, we have helped build school systems, high schools, universities, hospitals, nursing and long care homes. Up until our parent’s generation the church was active in many of these endeavours. Not any one church, but the collection of many.

The United Church was instrumental in the formation of Canadian Health Care, along with many other denominations. A parishioner, who is now at home with God, shared how he raised a prized calf to pay for his first son's birth. Accidents or operations could bankrupt a family. I can remember paying for the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) when I first started working. I did so at my parent's request, and I was motivated by the stories they shared of people they knew who did not participate. It was not cheap in the mid 70's. Today, it has become part of our yearly tax responsibilities.

The question then is, "Is our church still needed in our community?" What would your answer be?

Think about who would pick up the work we do? What abundance do we share with our community? Do we as the people of this church do things with glad and generous hearts?

How might we see the Act's description of the very early church, in our own church's today?

Remember the early church was living as if there were no tomorrow. What might we do and be if we felt there were no tomorrow?

The early church shared many things in common. Today, we as residents of Chatham Kent, the Province of Ontario and in the country of Canada share many things in common. We do it by paying our taxes each day as sales taxes, each of us pay payroll taxes, and each quarter as we pay our property taxes. Together, as Ontario residents, we are the government, and we pay government employees to handle the day-to-day dispersements of those things we all have in common.

Yet we as the church keep plugging those holes in our common safety net, with area Food Banks, helping those who need financial help, and those who need pastoral visits or services of transition offered by their local church. We offer these services as the generosity of who we are in common.

Today's text from Acts paints an ideal picture of the early Christian church. We may embrace that picture with great enthusiasm. Or we might dismiss the picture as fanciful, yet impractical. Today's theme has looked at how we may live this ideal today. We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 580 "Faith of Our Fathers"

Faith of our fathers, living still

in spite of dungeon, fire, and sword;
O how our hearts beat high with joy,
whene'er we hear that glorious word:
 faith of our fathers, holy faith,
 we will be true to you till death.

Faith of our mothers, daring faith,
your work for Christ is love revealed,
spreading God's word from pole to pole,
making love known and freedom real:
 faith of our mothers, holy faith,
 we will be true to you till death.

Faith of our sisters, brothers too,
who still must bear oppression's might,
raising on high, in prisons dark,
the cross of Christ still burning bright:
 faith for today, O living faith,
 we will be true to you till death.

Faith born of God, O call us yet;
bind us with all who follow you,
sharing the struggle of your cross
until the world is made anew.
 Faith born of God, O living faith,
 we will be true to you till death. **

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: As we celebrate Christ's resurrection, we also celebrate that as we share Christ's Resurrection, we also share the ministry of Jesus, helping the poor, visiting the lonely, healing the sick and caring for all of creation. Let us give, according to our faith.

Offertory: VU 541 "Praise God From Whom..."

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Offertory Prayer:

People: We bring what we have, O God. We know many around us are in need, and while we cannot do everything, we know that you can take what we offer and use it to make a difference. Take these gifts, take us, take your church; use all of us for the goodwill of all. Amen.

Chorus to Prayer: MV 121 "Hey Now! Singing Hallelujah

Hey now! Singing hallelujah!
Hey now! The morning has come!
Hey now! Singing hallelujah!
The tomb was empty at the rising sun.

Pastoral Prayer:

Closing Hymn: VU 602 "Blest Be 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. **

Benediction:

Eric: Go into the world with the grace of God in our world, so that others will want to be a part of what we have as God's people, now and forever more!

Closing Chorus: VU 884 "You Shall Go Out With Joy"

You shall go out with joy
and be led forth with peace;
the mountains and the hills
will break forth before you;
there'll be shouts of joy,
and all the trees of the field
will clap, will clap their hands!

And all the trees of the field will clap their hands,
(clap, clap)

the trees of the field will clap their hands,
(clap, clap)
the trees of the field will clap their hands
(clap, clap)
while you go out with joy.

Amen, Amen, Amen. *(5 Part Amen)*

Postlude: – Christie Coatsworth

Prayers: - Please include these people in your prayers this week.

We have offered prayer for these people each Sunday morning just before the Zoom Service.
It was suggested to share these names with the total group – as “In the Spirit We Are One”.

Cancer:

**Carol
Cheryl
Susan
Barb
Margie
Marcus
Ingrid
Jerry**

**Larry
Kerigan
Ken
Natalie
Ruth
Dave
Marj
Sue**

Evelyn

**Richard and Evelyn
Elaine**

**Eric Chamberlain’s Family
Ron
Gary
Janet
Tracey
Abby
David
Coatsworth Family**