



**Birchcliff Bluffs United Church**

**Ministers:** All the People – wherever and however they gather

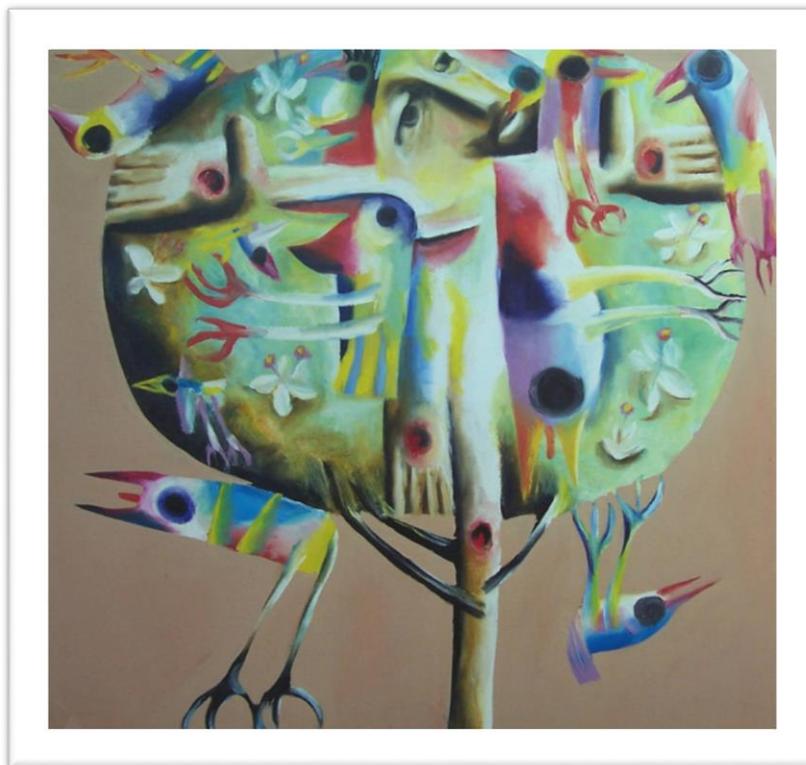
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**April 12, 2020 – Easter Sunday**



*Nathan Simpson (Australia, 1973–), Large Resurrection, 1999. Oil on canvas.*

**WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE**

**Reading: The resurrection story as told in the Gospel of John**

Early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance, and she stood weeping beside the tomb.

Even as she wept, she stooped to peer inside, and there she saw two angels in dazzling robes. One was seated at the head and the other at the foot of the place where Jesus' body had been lain.

They asked her, “Why are you weeping?” She answered them, “Because they have taken away my Rabbi, and I don’t know where they have put the body.”

No sooner had she said this than she turned around and caught sight of Jesus standing there, but she didn’t know it was Jesus. He asked her, “Why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?”

She supposed it was the gardener, so she said, “Please, if you are the one who carried Jesus away, tell me where you have laid the body and I will take it away.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary!”

She turned to him and said, “Rabboni!” – which means “Teacher.”

Jesus then said, “Don’t hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to Abba God. Rather, go to the sisters and brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Abba and your Abba, my God and your God!’ ”

Mary of Magdala went to the disciples. “I have seen the Teacher!” she announced. Then she reported to them what Jesus had said to her.



### Lighting the Christ Candle



At the first light of dawn, the women went to the graveside.

***Our hearts are burning within us.***

And there they found..... nothing?

***Our hearts are lighted with fire.***

Any empty tomb. Where is Jesus?

***Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed, Alleluia.***

### Opening Hymn

### Jesus Christ is Risen Today

VU 155

- 1 *Jesus Christ is risen today, hallelujah!  
our triumphant holy day, hallelujah!  
who did once, upon the cross, hallelujah!  
suffer to redeem our loss. Hallelujah!*
- 2 *Hymns of praise then let us sing hallelujah!  
unto Christ, our heavenly King, hallelujah!  
who endured the cross and grave, hallelujah!  
sinners to redeem and save. Hallelujah!*

3 *But the pains which he endured, hallelujah!  
our salvation have procured; hallelujah!  
now above the sky he's King, hallelujah!  
where the angels ever sing. Hallelujah!*

4 *Sing we to our God above, hallelujah!  
praise eternal as God's love; hallelujah!  
praise our God, ye heavenly host, hallelujah!  
praise the Son and Holy Ghost. Hallelujah!*

## **Life and Work of the Church**

### **Call to Worship**

In this moment

*Where mystic and modern meet.*

In this moment

*of empty tombs and heavenly messengers.*

In this moment

*of life, of death, of resurrection,*

We come.

*We come to wonder, we come to hope.*

But most of all, right now,

*We come this morning to worship God, Alleluia.*

### **Opening Hymn**

### **Thine Is the Glory**

**VU 173**

1 *Thine is the glory, risen, conquering Son:  
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.  
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,  
kept the folded grave-clothes where the body lay.  
Thine is the glory, risen, conquering Son:  
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.*

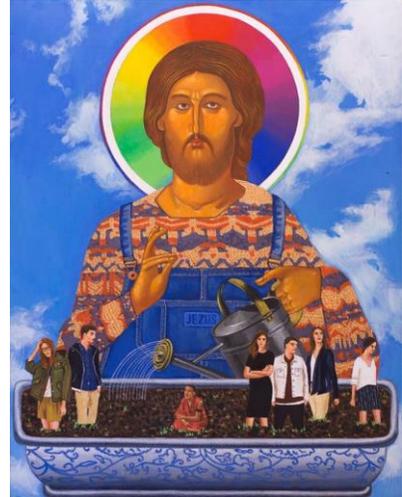
2 *Lo, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb!  
Lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom.  
Let the church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,  
for the Lord now liveth: death hath lost its sting.  
Thine is the glory, risen, conquering Son:  
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.*

3 *No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of life;  
life is nought without thee: aid us in our strife;  
make us more than conquerors, through thy deathless love;  
bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above.  
Thine is the glory, risen, conquering Son:  
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.*

## WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

### A Gardener's Robe

Mary thought that Jesus was the gardener. She was so desperate for some sign of Jesus that she didn't even recognize him when he spoke to her. Was it the clothes he was wearing? If he had been wrapped up in a shroud for burial, the simple cloth might have appeared like burlap, which we use today to wrap our plants in the garden. How could she not have recognized the very person she sought? Today, you will be invited to look for Jesus in new and unexpected places. Perhaps He is right under our very noses and we cannot see him; speaking to us with a voice that we don't recognize. Consider that if we saw Jesus on the street today, perhaps in burlap, perhaps in something even more unusual, we might dismiss him as a person we don't want to have much to do with. If we take the time to engage, just like Mary Magdalene, present in the moment, might we recognize Jesus right here and right now?



**Hymn:**

**Christ Is Alive (verse 1)**

**VU 158**

*Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.  
The cross stands empty to the sky.  
Let streets and homes with praises ring.  
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.*

### A Healing Robe



We think of others who dared to reach out and touch Jesus. During his ministry we think of the woman recorded in the Gospel of Luke who literally reached out to touch Jesus. How dare this woman reach out and touch Jesus robe? That was a pretty radical thing for a first century woman to do. And yet, this woman had faith that in Jesus there could be transformation. She was healed by her own action, by her own intentions of reaching out for something new that Jesus could offer. How can we take action in our own lives to be transformed as we reach out to each other today?

**Hymn:**

**Christ Is Alive (verse 2)**

**VU 158**

*Christ is alive! No longer bound  
to distant years in Palestine,  
but saving, healing, here and now,  
and touching every place and time.*

## A Shining Robe

When Jesus first started speaking out against the powers of empire: political, religious or otherwise, he spent time walking the walk and talking the talk. This authenticity shines through in his message of mutuality, equity and respect for all. Even as the powers that gathered around him tried to tarnish the image of that bright robe, Jesus continued to stand firm in his message. How might we live our lives with authenticity that allows us to shine for the world to see?

**Hymn:**

**Christ Is Alive (verse 3)**

**VU 158**

*In every insult, rift, and war,  
where colour, scorn, or wealth divide,  
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,  
and lives, where even hope has died.*

## A Humble Robe

There were moments where the people adored him. They saw him as the solution to all of their problems. They tried to reach out and get a piece of that robe but Jesus never bought into a cult of celebrity. Jesus came humbly, and remained true to his message even when he could have given in to popularity. How do we spread our robes out before the world with a message of love and equality for all without getting sidetracked by our desire to be loved by all?

**Hymn:**

**Christ Is Alive (verse 4)**

**VU 158**

*Women and men, in age and youth,  
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,  
and find the way, the life, the truth,  
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.*

## A Strewn Robe

Jesus sat down with the people he loved and offered himself in service to them. He wrapped himself in a towel, and laid his robe aside. And then he washed his friend's feet. This humility challenges our idea of power and asks us to consider how the giving up of power can lead us to greater understanding of ourselves and each other. How might we set aside the robes we wear that desire power and use what we have to serve each other with compassion and humility?



## Communion

**You are invited to the table.**



The peace of Christ be with you.

*And also with you.*

We are not alone, we live in God's world.

Lift up your hearts.

*We lift them up to God.*

Let us give thanks and praise.

*It is right to give our thanks and praise.*

## Prayer

...we take up all our praise, and add them to a chorus in singing:

### **MV 203      Holy, Holy, Holy**

*O holy, holy holy God,  
O God of time and space.  
All earth and sea and sky above  
bear witness to your grace.  
Hosanna in the highest heav'n,  
creation sings your praise.  
And blessed is the One who comes  
and bears your name always!*

...and so we remember Jesus and proclaim the mystery of our faith as we sing:

### **MV 204      Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen**

*Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen,  
Christ will come again!*

*Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen,  
Christ will come again!*

...may we who are many become one at your table.

**MV 205      Great Amen**

*Amen, amen, O Holy One!  
Hosanna and Amen!  
Amen, amen, O Holy One!  
Hosanna and Amen!*

*During this time you will be invited to share in juice and bread that you have in home*

**Prayer after Communion**

**Hymn:**

**Christ Is Alive (verse 5)**

**VU 158**

*Christ is alive, and comes to bring  
good news to this and every age,  
till earth and sky and ocean ring  
with joy, with justice, love and praise.*

**A Powerful Robe**

It didn't take long for the masses to abandon Jesus. It is difficult to stand up with those who challenge the status quo. Jesus' robe represented something new, but this meant taking risks that some were not prepared to take. Many people are cast aside by people in our society today.



How might we work to take risks and stand with those who suffer like Jesus did that day? Images of Jesus robe and how he engaged people during his life offers us ways to stand with those whom the world casts aside. Jesus shows us that all people are worthy of our time, our attention, and our love. Jesus' resurrection offers us new ways to be in this world, ways to resurrect ourselves in love and in service to each other and to the world. Today consider putting on a new

robe; one that Jesus offers to each of us when we dare to risk being for each other instead of just for ourselves. If you doubt that resurrection is possible, risk living your life in solidarity with Jesus' message of love and service so that resurrection happens all the time.

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

**Offering**

**Prayers of the People and Lord's Prayer**

We come in prayer before you God...

**Hymn:**

**Good Christians All, Rejoice and Sing**

**VU 169**

- 1 *Good Christians all, rejoice and sing!  
Now is the triumph of our King!  
To all the world glad news we bring:  
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!*
- 2 *The Lord of life is risen today!  
Bring flowers of song, bedeck the way;  
let every tongue rejoice and say:  
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!*
- 3 *Praise we in songs of victory  
that love, that life which cannot die,  
and sing with hearts uplifted high:  
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!*
- 4 *Your name we bless, O risen Lord,  
and sing today with one accord  
the life laid down, the life restored:  
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!*

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

**Benediction and Commissioning**



**Postlude**

## Other Resources for Today

*Readings relevant to today, both from the lectionary and from the material presented:*

### **Luke 8:43-48**      **New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

<sup>43</sup> Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years; and though she had spent all she had on physicians, no one could cure her. <sup>44</sup> She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his clothes, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. <sup>45</sup> Then Jesus asked, "Who touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and press in on you." <sup>46</sup> But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; for I noticed that power had gone out from me." <sup>47</sup> When the woman saw that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before him, she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. <sup>48</sup> He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

### **Psalm 118**

<sup>1</sup> O give thanks to GOD, for GOD is good;  
with steadfast love that endures forever!  
<sup>2</sup> Let Israel say,  
"GOD's steadfast love endures forever."  
<sup>14</sup> GOD is my strength and my might;  
and has become my salvation.  
<sup>15</sup> There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:  
"The right hand of GOD does valiantly;  
<sup>16</sup> the right hand of GOD is exalted;  
the right hand of GOD does valiantly."  
<sup>17</sup> I shall not die, but I shall live,  
and recount the deeds of GOD.  
<sup>18</sup> GOD has punished me severely,  
but did not give me over to death.  
<sup>19</sup> Open to me the gates of righteousness,  
that I may enter through them  
and give thanks to GOD.  
<sup>20</sup> This is the gate of GOD;  
the righteous shall enter through it.  
<sup>21</sup> I thank you that you have answered me  
and have become my salvation.  
<sup>22</sup> The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the chief cornerstone.  
<sup>23</sup> This is GOD's doing;  
it is marvelous in our eyes.  
<sup>24</sup> This is the day that GOD has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup> His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup> For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup> But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup> Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.” <sup>8</sup> So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup> Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

**Sources for Art**

1. *“Large Resurrection”* **Nathan Simpson** (Australia, 1973–), 1999. Oil on canvas.
2. *“Do Not Hold On to Me”* **He Qi** (China, 1950–), 2013. Oil on canvas.
3. *“Jezus Dobry Ogrodnik” [Jesus the Good Gardener]*, **Włodzimierz Kohut**, (Ukraine) 2015.
4. Window detail – All Saints Church, West Haddon England
5. *“Jesus Washing the Disciples’ Feet”* **David Paynter** (Sri Lanka, 1900-1975), 1929  
Trinity College Chapel - Kandy, Sri Lanka
6. *“Liberation Theology and Base Christian Communities”* **Gerardo Hernandez Arias** (Nicaragua) Mural in Batahola Norte Community Center, Managua Nicaragua.