



**Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge
of the United Church
Sunday April 18th, 2021
Minister: Rev. Tammy Allan**



*As we worship 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 these lands and the people,
just as those who came before us did.*

Prelude

Lighting the Christ Candle

The risen Christ lives today!

We are witnesses to these things.

We sing praise to God incarnate.

May Christ's love burn within us!

Opening Call

God is with us as we gather this day.

We gather, seeking the peace that God offers.

We are witnesses to God's steadfast love and faithfulness.

**We abide in God's love, and strive to keep God's
commandments.**

Come, let us gather to worship God today.

Music for meditation VU 296 This is God's Wondrous World

Opening Prayer

**God of light and love, we gather as witnesses to your abundant love. May
we discover you anew in our prayers, praise, and offerings. Encourage us
in our daily living, to become better stewards of your love and grace. We
pray this as followers of the way of Jesus. Amen.**

Time with Children see end of service – The Earth as an Apple

Music for meditation VU 661 Come to My Heart

Scripture Luke 24: 36b-48

³⁶While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ³⁷They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you

see that I have.”⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.⁴¹ While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?”⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish,⁴³ and he took it and ate in their presence.⁴⁴ Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.”⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures,⁴⁶ and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day,⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

Reflection

There’s a spiritual practice called Lectio Divina – I know some of you are familiar with it. It’s Latin for “Divine Reading.” It’s a way of reading and reflecting on the written word, in which you read or listen for the words or phrases that speak to you in the moment. Then you reflect and pray upon what those words are calling you to do or how they are calling you to live. You also then reflect more broadly, considering what the passage read is saying to the church.

The process really acknowledges the reality that each time you come to a reading, you come with fresh eyes and ears, and that each of us brings our own experiences to our understanding of the word. How I hear this passage in 2021 is different than how I would have heard it as a young adult, or a teen. How I hear it in a pandemic is different than how I would have heard it two or three years ago.

For me, this week, the particular phrases that spoke to me were: “Peace be with you” “...repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed” and “...you are the witnesses.”

And the question raised in my personal reflection and prayer time was “What does it mean to be witnesses to Jesus’ story, now, in 2021?”

Last year, David Holmes shared with you the story of Thomas – often known as the doubter. He wasn’t present when his fellow disciples saw Jesus enter the locked upper room. And when they told him what he had missed, he wasn’t quite able to understand or believe. He needed to see- and feel - for himself before he could really accept and believe in the resurrected Jesus.

This week’s gospel story connects very closely with that story. What we heard today follows immediately after the Emmaus Road story – we actually don’t have that Emmaus story in this year’s lectionary...so a little background...

Cleopas and another unnamed disciple are walking along the road to Emmaus,

following Jesus' appearance in the upper room, talking among themselves about the events of the previous days. They are joined on the way by a stranger – someone they don't recognize, and they continue in conversation with the stranger, who has asked what they are talking about. Cleopas and his walking partner fill the stranger in on all that has transpired – oblivious to the notion that this stranger is Jesus.

Oblivious that is, until the stranger broke bread with them at the end of the day. In the breaking of the bread, they say when the stranger really was.

Today's gospel reading parallels both the Thomas story and the Emmaus story quite closely. In today's story, disciples had gathered together, they were sharing stories of how Jesus had appeared to some...including Cleopas and his companion.

And again, as they are immersed in conversation, Jesus appears among them.

In today's story, we hear those words that Jesus often offered in greeting, words that we often use in church even now – words that spoke to me anew as I prepared for today.

“Peace be with you.”

Did Jesus speak those words in that moment because he senses the fear that his appearance might create for his friends? Did he show his hands and feet to help the disciples see and understand who he really was?

I believe it is human nature for us to need to see or experience something ourselves to really fully understand it. For some, that's even more true than for others. We've certainly seen that this past year – with stories of COVID deniers, people who believe COVID to be just a flu, until they come to know someone near to them who contracts the virus.

Why is it that we need to see for ourselves, and even then, question whether something is as we have been told? Why is it that many of us need to see for ourselves to believe? I guess its human nature. Maybe its says something about how some of us learn. Some of us are mostly experiential learners? I know I am.

I can read a text book – and learn a great deal – but I learn way more from an interactive class or conversation where I can engage with a writer and hear their story first hand, hear the passion in their voice, and see the love of their work in their eyes, and their expressions.

There's another aspect to these stories that we can't overlook, either. In the Emmaus story, it is in sharing food that the disciples come to know Jesus, through the communion of hearts and minds, with food and conversation.

And today's gospel story is the same – it's in the sharing of the broiled fish – a simple, common meal of the day, that leads to conversation, and the opening of the disciples minds to scripture and to their understanding in new ways. Communion, of hearts and minds, over a shared meal.

Today's story doesn't end there...the last 2 verses we heard today are key...

“⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things.”

Jesus was telling the disciples that their task was to speak the good news – to proclaim repentance and forgiveness, that they were to witness to that good news.

It's a commissioning of the disciples, a sending forth. Jesus didn't want his friends to stay in their own circles of comfort, but to go beyond that, to all nations...to all people.

Repentance and forgiveness. They go hand in hand. Repentance is about turning away from that which is unjust, or of sin, and to turn toward the ways of God, the ways of justice and peace. Remember, Jesus says “Peace **be** with you.” Peace **be**...to be, to live, peace live in you. Repentance is about transforming our ways of being from those that are soul destroying and hurtful to ways that give life, and give it abundantly, ways to witness to God's love.

And forgiveness...it **is** something to be proclaimed...to all the nations. It's not just for those close to Jesus - those in the inner circles of his ministry, but for all people, of all nations. Jesus said “Peace be with you.” Peace indeed, would be the gift of that message that God's forgiveness is for all. And if God forgives all, we must seek to be witnesses to that kind of forgiveness in our own lives.

We must seek to be bearers of the peace of forgiveness in our own relationships. For are we not disciples too. Are we not, in the hearing of God's word today, called and commissioned into discipleship, into sharing God's good news not just in word, but in deed...in how we live our own lives.

We are called to live the resurrection story, to bring peace to the world in which we live. May the Spirit of Christ guide us and give us the wisdom to do just that. Amen.

Music for meditation VU 602 In Loving Partnership We Come

This Week's Minute for Mission

None of us can go a single day without having an impact on someone's life. And we can't always predict how what we do to help change a life might wind up changing ours, too.

Take Bill Darnell. Bill's love affair with nature began at camp, but it didn't end there. Far from it. Bill's childhood experience of camp wound up inspiring one of the world's most influential environmental movements.

"Camping had a big effect on me. I grew up in suburbia and didn't have much access to the natural world. Camping was an opportunity to go out and be in nature. It was amazing. Being at camp solidified my strong connection with the natural world," he says.

Bill's early camp experience instilled such a love of nature that when he became an adult, he became an environmental activist. "When I was 25 years old, not far removed from my years in camp, I saw that they were testing nuclear weapons. That was so obviously wrong that I felt I had to do something to stop it," he says. So Bill and a small group of friends anxiously climbed on board an 85-foot fishing boat later dubbed *Greenpeace*. Together, they set sail for Alaska to stop the testing of a nuclear bomb. Greenpeace as a movement was born.

Bill's story proves that camping experiences in childhood can lead to a lifelong commitment to care for God's creation.

As scientists and activists sound the alarm around climate change and experts report that not spending enough time outside is having an impact on our children's health and well-being, outdoor ministry has never been more crucial. It's just one of the many reasons why Mission & Service really matters.

Your Mission & Service gifts support over two dozen United Church-run camps across the country. Every year, your generosity gives thousands of children an opportunity to go to camp. There, they learn life skills, meet other campers, explore faith, and spend time outside.

Like Bill, some young people may leave camp so impressed by the natural environment that they get on board a movement to take care of it. "Camping made an incredible difference in my life. I know it will make an incredible difference to young people across Canada. I give thanks to those who support it," Bill says.

Please make a gift to **Mission & Service** today. Your support not only makes a difference right now but also has an impact on the future for all of us who are blessed to live in the beautiful world God created.

Offertory Music VU 541 Praise God From Whom All Blessings
Flow

Offertory Prayer

O God, we give thanks for all that we have and all that we are. We offer, a portion from our abundance – our time, our energy, our resources. May what we offer bring hope and healing to our world. Amen.

Prayers for This Day

Loving God, as we walk together in faith, we pray for our world, our community, and our families.

We pray for those who suffer with illness or injury, for those awaiting surgeries, or undergoing treatments...in their struggle and pain, O God, may they know the healing of the Spirit.

We pray for those who suffer from worry or stress – for whom concerns about the future bring those fears forth. We think of those who are struggling to run businesses during these times of restrictions. We know how hard that must be, yet we also know how caring for one another in love is so important in these times.

We pray for the world beyond our borders – for places where access to healthcare and vaccinations are limited at best, non existent at worst. We pray for all those places in our world where conflict abounds, and where powers are abused. May peace prevail on earth, O God.

May we, as your disciples, hear the call to move out into the world, to take the inspiration that comes from being part of a Christian community and go and share the good news of faith and mercy with those we meet each day.

We pray this day, for families living with loss, and those sitting at the bedside of loved ones; that they may find peace and hope in the care and compassion offered by friends and family. Walk with them on this journey, O God of love.

Bless us all, we pray...and hold the prayers of our hearts, that we bring to you in a moment of silence, O God.

Spirit of life, we give thanks for your presence among us, and in the world. Hear us as we pray the words that Jesus taught us to say...

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

A Blessing for Today

Let us go from here to proclaim God's message of justice, grace and love.

May we go to love deeply and show great care in everything that we do.

Go now in peace and love.

Amen.

Thank you for taking time to be part of the Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge worship experience. We are having in- person worship with careful COVID precautions: Olds – 9:30am and Sundre - 1:30pm.

The bulletin and sermon will continue to be posted to the websites, for those who are unable to join us. Messages will also be posted to the Facebook Page, Olds and Sundre United Churches.

Questions? Wish to financially support our ministries?

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Children's time:

Earth As An Apple Activity

Found on Facebook [https://canolaeatwell.com/earth-as-an-](https://canolaeatwell.com/earth-as-an-apple/?fbclid=IwAR1qGyvQSaJujkzNflu4Jc3Uwhc_jcsravmXVIk8EAQ8XrZCOU)

[apple/?fbclid=IwAR1qGyvQSaJujkzNflu4Jc3Uwhc_jcsravmXVIk8EAQ8XrZCOU](https://canolaeatwell.com/earth-as-an-apple/?fbclid=IwAR1qGyvQSaJujkzNflu4Jc3Uwhc_jcsravmXVIk8EAQ8XrZCOU)
[WA37Vyt8s](https://canolaeatwell.com/earth-as-an-apple/?fbclid=IwAR1qGyvQSaJujkzNflu4Jc3Uwhc_jcsravmXVIk8EAQ8XrZCOU)

What would you say if I told you that we grow all of the food to feed the world on less than 1/32nd of the planet? Have you ever taken the time to think about how very little arable land we have in the world? Here on the Prairies it can be easy to take for granted the wide open, fertile fields that surround us.

Every April 22 we celebrate Earth Day. This year I started thinking about my first days at the Canola Learning Centre farm.

Often when we have school children visit the farm we do the Earth is an Apple activity. The first time I did this I was shocked at the tiny little strip of apple peel I was holding up to the kids to represent all of the growing land on Earth.

This is an easy activity that can be done almost anywhere, with the young and

the old. I'd love to credit a source for this activity but it seems to be all over the web. So thanks to whomever you are – we send you warm vibes!



1. Get an apple and a knife. Make sure you have a proper cutting surface and that little fingers are safely tucked away.



2. Slice the apple into quarters. Set aside three of the quarters. These represent the oceans, lakes, rivers and all other bodies of water. The fourth quarter represents the total land area of the world.



3. Slice the land quarter in half. You have two 1/8th pieces. Set aside one of the pieces. This represents the ice, deserts, swamps and mountains. The other 1/8th is the land that you still have left.



4. Slice this 1/8th piece into four sections. You have four 1/32nd pieces. Set aside three of these pieces. These represent areas too rocky, too wet, too cold, too steep or with soil too poor to produce food. They also include the

areas of land that could produce food but are buried under cities, highways, suburbs, shopping centres and other structures people have built.



5. This leaves us with a 1/32nd slice of the earth. Carefully peel this

slice. This tiny bit of peeling represents the surface. This strip is less than five feet deep and produces all of the food in the world.

When we see this small amount of land that produces our food, it's easy to see that protecting land resources is important.

Farmers take extra care when working on their land. They are stewards of the land, air and water. Farmers take pride in keeping Earth's most precious natural resource healthy and productive.

Here are Just the Facts that I found at CropLife Canada: (*these are 2018 statistics)

- World food demand will increase 70% by 2050.
- A farmer in 1900 produced enough food for 10 people. Today's farmer feeds over 120 people.
- One of every eight Canadian jobs is related to agriculture.
- No-till farming can reduce soil erosion by 90 to 95 percent or more compared to conventional tillage practices, and continuous no-till can make the soil more resistant to erosion over time.
- One tree can remove the same amount of carbon dioxide from the air that is emitted from a car driving 17,700 km.
- Half a billion people live in countries chronically short of water; by 2050, the number will rise to more than four billion.
- Visit CropLife Canada to read the full list of Just the Facts related to modern agriculture.
- This Earth Day, April 22, join the conversation #FarmToFood!

Live Well...Keep Well...Be Well...Jenn