

*Common Worship in Separate Places  
For the people of Elmwood Avenue Presbyterian Church  
London, Ontario  
and their friends*

*Easter Day  
4 April 2021*

*To cross the threshold into worship, light a candle and keep a moment of silence.*

*Opening Words*

L: Alleluia! Christ is risen.

**P: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

L: Let us worship God.

*Prayers of Adoration and Confession*

God of grace and glory, you cause the sun to rise and chase away the shadows of night. We praise you, for on this day you raised Jesus Christ from death to life. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, that we may be made alive with his power and peace. Draw us into the fullness of eternal life with you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God forever.

Holy one, you abound in mercy. We confess our fear and failure. We live in violence; we abuse the earth you gave us to care for; we lust for things that perish in the grasping; we call evil good and good evil. Forgive our sin, banish our fear, and renew our lives through the victory of him who was dead, but lives.

L: Lord, have mercy upon us.

**P: Christ, have mercy upon us.**

L: Lord, have mercy upon us.

Almighty God, who through your only Son Jesus Christ overcame the old order of sin and death to make all things new in him: grant that we, who celebrate with joy his glorious resurrection, may be risen with him, and seek the things that are above, where he now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. *Amen*

*An Assurance of Pardon*

L: "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." May God grant us pardon, true repentance, and bring us to eternal life.

**P: May the peace of Christ be with us all.**

*Prayer for Illumination* Holy One, roll away the stone from the entrance to our hearts, that we may hear your truth and feel your joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*

### *The Psalm for the Day*

**Psalm 136: 1-9, 25-26** (*God's Work in Creation and in History*)

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,  
 for his steadfast love endures for ever.  
 O give thanks to the God of gods,  
 for his steadfast love endures for ever.  
 O give thanks to the Lord of lords,  
 for his steadfast love endures for ever;  
 who alone does great wonders,  
 for his steadfast love endures for ever;  
 who by understanding made the heavens,  
 for his steadfast love endures for ever;  
 who spread out the earth on the waters,  
 for his steadfast love endures for ever;  
 who made the great lights,  
 for his steadfast love endures for ever;  
 the sun to rule over the day,  
 for his steadfast love endures for ever;  
 the moon and stars to rule over the night,  
 for his steadfast love endures for ever;  
 who gives food to all flesh,  
 for his steadfast love endures for ever.  
 O give thanks to the God of heaven,  
 for his steadfast love endures for ever.

*(Said together)* **Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen**

### *A Reading for the Day*

**St Mark 16: 1-8** (*The first Easter morning*)

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.

And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?'

When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.'

So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

L: This is the Gospel of the Risen Christ.

**P: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

### *Some thoughts on the Reading*

**St Mark 16:4** *"When they looked up, they saw that the stone had already been rolled back."*

"When they looked up..." Had these women been looking down? We look 'up' when we feel hopeful. We look 'down' when we're consumed by grief. That's how they came to Jesus' tomb that day, with tears.

"He is not here," says that mysterious young man – an angel, perhaps? That's the first message of Easter. Not "*Here* he is!", but "He is not *here*." Not in this place of death.

Well, where is he then?

"He's going ahead of you," says the messenger. "He's going to Galilee, where it all began. You go there, too, and begin your life with him all over again. Stop staring at the ground. Wipe your tears. Look up. Look ahead. *He is not here.*"

How do they react? Do they jump for joy and dance a jig? No, they run away as fast as they can. "They fled the tomb in terror and said nothing to anyone," says St Mark. In the face of death, and life beyond death, *silence* is eloquent too. "They said nothing to anyone." It's a mystery so staggering it *ought* to hush us up for a while.

It's as though St Mark is saying this: if, on Easter morning, your knees aren't shaking and your heart doesn't skip a beat, if your tongue isn't tongue-tied and your jaw hasn't dropped, then you haven't yet 'looked up'. To see what? To see what is *not* there. Death.

It's not that the women saw something they didn't expect to see; it's that they didn't see what they *did* expect to see: the lifeless body of Jesus. "He has gone ahead of you to Galilee. Follow him there."

It had all begun in Galilee, the teaching and healing and following. They must return there, now, to begin their life with Jesus all over again. There is more life to live.

The message of Easter is as if someone snuck up from behind, tapped you on the shoulder, and said, "Are you aware that your life doesn't have to be stuck in the rut it's in right now? You have more in you, waiting to come alive. The un-lived 'you' is God's gift to you. Do you dare to live it? Follow him. He's gone on ahead. He waits for you."

It's an open road from the open tomb, and who knows where it may lead us? But we will not begin our lives afresh by standing still in the place of death. Standing still is death; movement is life.

St John ends his Gospel by saying, in effect, "Jesus *did* more, and he *means* more, than I could possibly tell you. If anyone were to try to write it all down, the world couldn't contain all the books that would be written."

In other words, Jesus' resurrection is the Word that can't be contained by words, any more than it can be imprisoned by a tomb. How could there ever be a *last* sentence, made of words, that forever finishes the Gospel Story? If there were, we might close the cover of this book, and smile that things turned out well for Jesus and his friends, and then put it back on the bookshelf and promptly forget about it.

Or we might leave Easter behind us the way we leave a movie theatre when the credits roll. We go back to the same old life, stuck in our rut, mired in grief, 'looking down'.

We dare not do that. His story is as open-ended as the open tomb. It opens onto you and me, here and now. There *is* more life to live. The Lord is risen.

### ***Prayers of Intercession***

God of everlasting love, through your Word you made all things; you have opened the door from death to life. Hear the song of your creation attuned to the hymn of resurrection, sung by your Church, and grant us your blessing.

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

We pray for the Church of Jesus Christ. We long to sing in your sanctuary again, to praise you with organ and trumpet and voice. Revive us when we are weary, console us when we are full of woe, and set our feet anew on the way Christ leads us.

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

We pray for the world, caught in the net of suffering caused by the Covid virus. Hear the cries of all your children of every faith and no faith. To every troubled soul and each infected body, grant mercy, refreshment, and relief.

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

Eternal God, remember in your mercy those who find faith difficult. Ease their burden. Remember all who live with temptation or despair. Remember those who feel

the agony of life. Let them know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new.

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

We pray for those filled with anger, sadness, and worry. Give peace to those torn from within by tension and from without by conflict. Tame the unruly forces that seize us, weaken our love, and erode our trust in each other.

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who long to work and be active again, whose lives have been impoverished by the pandemic. Help us find a way to keep each other fed, housed and cared for. Do not let our economy be brutal and our politics unjust.

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

Almighty God, we remember before you those who have died, with whom we shared many happy Easters, who now rest in your peace and worship before your throne. Bring us, with them, to those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, which you have prepared for those who love you...*(keep a time of silence in God's presence)*....

L: Lord in your mercy

**P: Hear our prayer**

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored the dignity of our human nature: grant that we may share the risen life of him who humbled himself to share in our humanity, our Saviour Jesus Christ our Lord.

As our Saviour has taught, so we pray:

**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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever. Amen**

### ***Benediction***

*(Said together)* **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever. Amen**