



An Affirming Congregation of The United Church of Canada

2023 April 8

Easter Vigil



Welcome and Inclusion

We open our hearts and our church family to all people in our community regardless of differing abilities, ethnicity, economic circumstances, sexual orientation, age, or gender identity. Many people's lives continue to be devastated by hatred, prejudice, and inequality, therefore we stand with those who are adversely affected by injustice, alienation and oppression.

Welcome to Robertson-Wesley

Please know that in the eyes of God you already belong here and you are welcome to participate in any of the activities of the congregation.

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is Treaty 6 territory, a traditional meeting ground for Indigenous peoples. We acknowledge the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 4, who are of mixed Indigenous & European heritage.

ACCESSIBILITY

There is an elevator located inside the building with the glass door entrance.

Access ramps can be found: inside leading from the lobby to the sanctuary and outside at the rear of the building, leading from the parking lot.

There are accessible washrooms located in the lobby near the elevator.

Hearing assistance devices are available from the ushers.

Large print worship bulletins, and hymn books are available from the ushers.

Service animals are welcome, except where food is prepared.

We commit to make R-W a comfortable space for people with cognitive impairment. If you require accommodations related to cognitive functioning please contact the office.

BABY/ CHILDREN'S AMENITIES

People can breastfeed anywhere in the building, should you want more privacy there is designated nursing space in the Millson room, located by the grand piano. Baby changing tables are installed in all washrooms. If you wish to use it, a children's activity centre is set up in the Chapel. There are also activity books available for children. Please ask the usher.

INFORMATION

The ushers located at the entrances are here to help should you have any questions. More information about the church and church activities can be found in the pamphlet racks outside Memorial Hall.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Please do not leave valuables unattended anywhere in the church.



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Friends in Christ

Prelude: 1) *My Jesus, I Love Thee* 2) *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*,
arr. by Patricia Sanders Cota Nova Bells

Call to Worship:

God of life and death
we wait in hope.
God of all the worlds that are
we wait in hope.
God of dazzling darkness
we wait in hope.
We wait in hope and awe.¹

Opening Prayer:

God of life, of all life and of each life, we lay our lives before you.
We give our lives to you, from whom nothing in us is hidden.
You are before us, God, you are behind;
you are around us, God, you are within.
O God of life, you know the secret thoughts of every heart.
We bring the faith that is in us, and the doubt;
we bring the joy that is in us, and the sorrow.
O God of life, you are in the light, and in the darkness.
We bring the knowledge that is in us, and the ignorance;
we bring the hope that is in us, and the despair.
O God of life, O generous Spirit,
Renew us with your life, tonight, tomorrow, and always. Amen.²

Hymn: *Day is Done*

Voices United 433

Day is done, but love unfailing dwells ever here;
shadows fall, but hope, prevailing, calms every fear.
God, our Maker, none forsaking,
take our hearts of Love's own making,
watch our sleeping, guard our waking, be always near.
Dark descends, but light unending shines through our night;
you are with us, ever lending new strength to sight:
one in love, your truth confessing,
one in hope of heaven's blessings,
may we see, in love's possessing, love's endless light!
Eyes will close, but you unsleeping watch by our side;
death may come, in love's safekeeping still we abide.
God of love, all evil quelling, sin forgiving, fear dispelling,
stay with us, our hearts indwelling, this eventide.

¹ Ruth Burgess & Chris Polhill, *Eggs and Ashes; Practical & Liturgical resources for Lent and Holy Week*, (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 2004), p. 208.

² The Iona Community, *Iona Abbey Worship Book*, (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 2001), p. 181.

God's Holy Word

Aria: *He Was Despised*, by G. F. Handel

Melisa Guilbeault, soloist

Scripture:

John 19:38-42 • The burial of Jesus.

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Hymn: *Stay with Me*

Voices United 950

**Stay with me, remain here with me,
watch and pray, watch and pray. (X3)**

Prayer:

A kind-hearted child is laid to rest and a loving mother bids him farewell. She walks away with mystery in her heart and a thousand tears in her grieving soul.

(Pause to reflect on Mary's grief as Jesus is laid in the tomb.)

Mary, you have been there before us.

You have stood at the tomb of farewell.

We, too, often face painful endings.

Like you, we need to eventually let go,
believing that the Holy One will console us.

You know how grief engulfs the heart and tries to strangle the hope it contains.

You have felt the drain of a great loss and the emptiness it creates inside. Teach us how to have confidence in God when we question what the future holds.

Strengthen our faith as we try to let go of whatever keeps us from growing deeper.

We remember those who are moving through painful farewells...

(Pause for silent remembering)

Mary, teach us how to be people of faith.

Amen.³

³ Joyce Rupp, **Out of the Ordinary; Prayers, Poems and Reflections for Every Season**, (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2010), p. 117-118.

**Stay with me, remain here with me,
watch and pray, watch and pray. (X3)**

Scripture:

Romans 6:3-11 • Dying and Rising with Christ.

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Creator, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Motet: *Rise Up, My Love*, by Healey Willan Robertson-Wesley Choral Scholars

Scripture:

Psalms 31:1-4, 15-16 • Prayer and Praise for Deliverance.

In you, O Lord, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me. Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily. Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me. You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me, take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge. My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors. Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.

Reflection: Healing, nourishment, & prayers among friends.

Rev. Karen Bridges

Pastoral Prayers

Lord's Prayer - A Paraphrase

Voices United p. 916

**Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be.
Parent of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom**

**Sustain our hope and come on earth.
With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
Now and forever. Amen.**

Grateful Response

Light Litany:

(The Paschal candle is lit.)

Hope then is a gift...total, unexpected, incomprehensible,
undeserved, but to meet it, we have to descend into liminality.

**It is the acceptance of life in the midst of death, not because we
have courage, or light, or wisdom to accept, but because by some
miracle the God of life accepts to live, in us, at the very moment
when we descend into death.**

(Lit individual candles)

Motet: *Ubi Caritas*, by Maurice Durufle Robertson-Wesley Choral Scholars

*Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est.
Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor.
Exultemus, et in ipso iucundemur.
Timeamus, et amemus Deum vivum.
Et ex corde diligamus nos sincero.*

Where charity and love are, God is there.

Christ's love has gathered us into one.

Let us rejoice and be pleased in Him.

Let us fear, and let us love the living God.

And may we love each other with a sincere heart.

Let us affirm our faith:

**We believe that God is present in the darkness before dawn; in
the waiting of uncertainty where fear and courage join hands.
Conflict and caring link arms, and the sun rises over barbed
wire. We believe in a with-us God who sits down in our midst to
share our humanity. We affirm a faith that takes us beyond the
safe place, into action, into vulnerability and into the streets. We
commit ourselves to work for change and to put ourselves on the
edge; to choose life and be used by the spirit for God's new
community of hope. Amen.⁴**

⁴ From Iona Abbey Worship Book; The Iona Community, p. 109.

**Stay with us through the night,
Stay with us through the pain.
Stay with us, blessed stranger
till the morning breaks again.**

**Stay with us through the night,
Stay with us through the grief.
Stay with us, blessed stranger
till the morning brings relief.**

**Stay with us through the night.
Stay with us through the dread.
Stay with us, blessed stranger
till the morning breaks new bread.**

Benediction:

Risen with Christ,
may we know the reassurance of God's presence.
Risen with Christ,
may we accept the challenge to work in God's way.
Risen with Christ,
may we be living proof that God's love will never die.
Amen.⁵

All are invited to leave in silence when you are ready. A free will offering can be given in the offering plates by the exit.

Your donations tonight support R-W Community of Faith programs and building operations, as well as outreach projects and programs in the city and around the world. You can donate by e-transfer to pay@rwuc.org, cheque, pre-authorized remittance, Pay Pal on the church website, or with the debit machine after the service. Tax receipts are issued at the end of the year for donations over \$20 if your name and address are provided.

Worship Notes

A vigil is the act of keeping awake during a time or even when a person or a group stays together in a place and quietly waits, and prays with candlelight. Please remain in the sanctuary in silence as long as you like. We encourage people to light a candle on this night as we wait at the tomb of Jesus.

⁵ Written by Beth W Johnston, **Gathering**, Lent/Easter, 2023, p. 37. Used with permission.

Cover Image

Cover image was taken by Rev. Karen Bridges April 2022.

Minister of Spiritual and Pastoral Care Development: Vacant
Minister of Congregation and Community Development: Rev. Karen Bridges
Bridging Minister: Rev. Dirk Jessen
Music Director: Dr. Allan Bevan
Office Administrator: Elyse Munro
Facilities Manager: Brad Campbell
Financial Manager: Garth van Herwaarden

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

This week (Holy week) we have honoured Jesus' life and death through a variety of hour long worshipful experiences.



In the last week of Jesus' life, he entered Jerusalem with people cheering him on with a **Palm Parade**. (Palm Sunday)



A few days later he had dinner with his friends - his disciples - and he gave them communion at the **Last Supper**. (Maundy Thursday)
After dinner he went to the garden to pray. While in the garden Jesus got arrested!



On Friday (**Good Friday**) there was a trial and Jesus was sentenced, tortured and crucified.



The disciples and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene mourned his death and held a **Vigil** (Easter Vigil, this service)

Three days after being crucified the tomb where his body laid was empty. **Jesus was resurrected!** (Easter Sunday)

Experience the joy and hope of Jesus' resurrection at one of R-W's Easter services tomorrow!



Sunday, April 9 7:30 am
Easter Sunrise Service
Paul Kane Park

Sunday, April 17 10:30 am
Easter Sunday Service
Sanctuary & Online