

### **Gathering in the Spirit...**

Welcome and Call to Worship

Prayers of Invocation and Confession

Risen Christ, yours is the heartbeat of grace deep within us,  
the light step beside us on our journeys,  
the footprints in the sand, revealing how you carry us when we grow weary.  
Yours is the face we glimpse when we perceive one another's holiness.  
Yours are the promises: that life conquers death, that goodness is stronger than evil, and that we can build our lives around your shining truth.  
Show us where you are today, in this place, and in each of us. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

God of majesty and mercy, even as we offer you our praise,  
we confess our slowness of heart, failing to see Easter's revealing light.  
We have failed to see you in our brothers and sisters,  
We have failed to give our hearts to you.  
Holy God, we are selfish, scared, and impatient with this coronavirus and often numb to the beauty of the world, and the potential for grace that is around us and within us.  
Hear us now as we confess those times we have failed to live by Easter's light.  
(silence).... Amen

Words of Assurance

Friends on the journey, born anew with the Easter story,  
hear the good news of the gospel: You are forgiven.  
Jesus is near. Grace is real.  
We do not have to be perfect in our actions or our beliefs.  
We need only to open our hearts—to mystery, love, presence and joy.

God of the Living Word, you come to us in sacred story, in bread broken and wine poured out, in friendship and in conversation. Send us your Holy Spirit as your Word is read. May our hearts burn within us as we encounter your truth, through Christ, our Risen Lord. Amen.

### **Sharing the Good News...**

Scripture: Luke 24:13-35      The Emmaus Walk

Offering Reminder and Announcements

Meditation: "And it came to pass...And Choose to Hope"

Psalm 13

### **And it Came to Pass...and Choose to Hope**

Ps 13:1-7 Various Verses

Please hear these wonderful words from Ps 13.

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me  
forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I bear pain in my soul,

and have sorrow in my heart all day long?

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

Consider and answer me, O LORD my God!

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep  
of death,

and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed";

my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

But I trusted in your steadfast love;

my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

I will sing to the LORD,

because he has dealt bountifully with me.

A plane was carrying 55 passengers a few years back. It circled an airport in western Scotland for half an hour, waiting to land. Why? The air traffic controller was eating his lunch. The officials at the airport on the island of Benbecula in the Western Isles of Scotland apologized for the incident. They blamed it on a shortage of air traffic controllers. They said the airport had only one air traffic controller.

The Times newspaper said that there had been uproar in the terminal building, as families watched the plane from Glasgow linger in a holding pattern. No other planes were landing or taking off. The plane was tantalizingly within view. Both the passengers and those waiting for them were impatiently waiting. The plane had left Glasgow 25 minutes late, and it finally touched down in Benbecula 55 minutes late - after the air traffic controller finished his lunch and returned to the radar screen.

Do you ever feel that life can be like that? You are stuck in a holding pattern going no-where fast! You feel hopeless. Life isn't going the way you dreamed it would. Some relationships are in deep trouble. Whatever is worrying you

is offering no signs of progress. Your depression and sense of failure is getting worse. With the coronavirus, in many ways life seems on hold, but with no light at the end of the tunnel.

Even the humor like the following may be getting old even when it brightens your day. Feeling guilty about your kids watching too much TV? Just mute it and put the subtitles on! Boom! Now they are reading.

For those who wanted a world without vaccines...here's the world without ONE vaccine.

Be like Darth Vader, the bad guy of the movie series Star Wars. Wear a mask. Don't visit your son or daughter. Be emotionally and socially distant. Follow orders.

Now I know why dogs are so excited to go on walks.

Have you ever been in contact with glitter? Like hugged or shaken hands with someone who was wearing or using it? And how for the next two weeks it hangs around forever and ends up on surfaces you can't recall touching, and places you can't imagine it ever getting, and seems to be still there even after showering and washing? Think of COVID-19 as glitter.

I imagine we are all becoming impatient. Yes, farmers and many are able to go about most of their regular spring activities but...it just feels different. Last Saturday, Rose and I moved her furniture to Drake, and we appreciated the help we had to load and unload the U-Haul. But after words we realized – we really enjoyed the face to face contact we had! And we all tried to keep our distance. But it sure felt good to be in the proximity of friends.

Have you ever felt like King David when he wrote Psalm 13 and asked the following **four questions**: “How long, LORD, will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?  
How long must I wrestle with my thoughts  
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?”

I suspect we all have days and times like King David had. This psalm on a first reading seems melancholy. It is depressing. We don't know at what period of life David was in when he wrote this psalm. We do know it was written when David was facing some big problem. He was worried & troubled and life was turbulent. We know he lived with some terrible situations.

Years ago in 1927 an American S-4 submarine was accidentally rammed by a ship off the coast of Massachusetts. It sank immediately. The entire crew was trapped in a prison house of death. Every effort was made to rescue the crew, but all ultimately failed. Near the end of the ordeal, a deep sea diver, who was part of the rescue crew, thought he heard tapping on the steel wall of the sunken sub. He placed his helmet up against the side of the vessel to hear the Morse code being tapped out from within. It was repeating the same question; “Is there any hope?” How long till help? 40 men died.

At times, life seems hopeless. Some events drive us to deep despair. At times nothing makes sense. The best people come down with life threatening diseases. Accidents cause death & injury to people we know. Epidemics occur, including suicide. Wars and refugees never cease. People find false refuge in drugs and alcohol. Senseless violence occurs. There often is unkindness and suppression of life opportunities going on.

Research and experience tell us, “We can live forty days without food. Eight days without water. Four minutes without air. But only a few seconds without hope!” We need hope but so often hope seems unattainable. Some people in some situations began to give up on hope. They see no light at the end of the tunnel. This is why it's important to help each other keep, find, recover, gain, and grow hope.

Spiritually we know that people need Jesus to have ultimate hope. The Apostle Paul tells us, “Remember that...you were separate from Christ,...without hope and without God in the

world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” (Ephesians 2:12-13)

Being a follower of Jesus gives us a baseline of hope – even in bad situations, even when we have sinned, even when circumstances overwhelm us. Our faith is in the power and love of Almighty God who can guide us through.

But many people live their lives with false hope. They think: Winning the lottery will solve all my problems. I can choose to beat my addiction any time I want to. If I just get that job or that spouse, I will be happy. If the right political party gets in, all will be well. If I do enough good deeds, God will let me into heaven. More than one person thinks that they can get away with something, and maybe they do, but it scars their inner character. Or it passes on the virus to others. Some people believe that wisdom is a good guide – but true wisdom has to be based on the awe and fear of God. Refusal to believe the messages of the Bible is not real hope. There are not just a few people who live in a fantasy land and hope of their own creation.

But King David, despite his situation, and his good questions, in Psalm 13, shows us his honesty, his bravery and his realism. It’s true in the first two verses David was singing the blues. He clearly was having more than just a bad day. He was experiencing crushing circumstances. He seems to be in a prolonged period of deep depression. He clearly was feeling abandoned by God. But then he prays and recovers his trust and hope in his Creator.

In verses one and two David expressed his feeling of abandonment and despair. But then in **verses three and four**, David prayed. David asked God to turn his face toward him and answer his questions. He had not given up.

About 100 years ago the great preacher F.B. Meyer preached a sermon. He said, “Five kinds of people dwell in the dust:

- (1). Those who feel forsaken by God.
- (2). Those who feel their prayers are going nowhere.

- (3). Those who are discouraged with life’s possibilities.
- (4). Those who are going through difficult financial or physical stresses.
- (5). Those who are stuck in a job or family situation they cannot get out of.”

So what should those kind of people and our selves do? We pray and keep praying. It’s crucial that David gives us the example of turning from complaining to praying.

David’s prayer was, “Look on me & answer, LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death, & my enemy will say, ‘I have overcome him, my foes will rejoice when I fall.’”

David was still struggling. But he became more patient. He moved from self pity to asking for understanding. He moved from whining to wanting help to cope. And he gave God a good reason to answer him: don’t let my foes rejoice.

We don’t always fully understand why bad things happen or why we and other suffer or why we don’t get the answers we want when we pray. I suspect God has heard lots of prayers since the start of the new year, from some very desperate people.

But what real prayer does is, it changes us. Charles Spurgeon used to say, "A little faith will take your soul to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your soul." The act of prayer helps us grow hope.

A pilot flying a plane-load of passengers when suddenly the rudder malfunctioned. He radioed the control tower in panic and shouted, "The rudder has malfunctioned! What shall I do?"

The air traffic controller radioed back, "Keep calm, Captain. Just repeat after me: Wings flap... check. Velocity... check. Altitude check." The pilot made the appropriate adjustments, and the aircraft continued on course.

Not five minutes later, however, the starboard engine stalled. The pilot radioed the control

tower and shouted, "The starboard engine has stalled! What shall I do?"

The air traffic controller radioed back, "Keep calm, Captain. Just repeat after me: "Wings flap... check. Velocity... check. Altitude check." The pilot made the appropriate adjustments, and again the airplane continued on course.

However, not five minutes later, the pilot radioed the control tower a third time. This time he shouted, "Mayday! Mayday! Both the engines have gone! What shall I DO?"

The air traffic controller calmly radioed back, "Keep calm, Captain. Just repeat after me. "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name..."

A.C. Dixon wrote: "When we depend upon organizations, we get what organizations can do; When we depend on education, we get what education can do; When we depend on humans, we get what humans can do; But when we depend on prayer, we get what God can do."

David starts this psalm telling God what he thinks. Then the second part is David wanting God to give him some light, some insight, some hope. **Then the third** and last part of the psalm is where David rediscovers hope and gets back on solid footing. He returns "home" spiritually.

He says, "But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the LORD's praise, for he has been good to me."

This is a constant pattern in the psalms and in our lives. We cry out in pain and wonder when will it end. Then we try to understand what's going on and bargain with God. But then we remember the Almighty's unfailing love. We remember our Creator's salvation. So we choose to trust. And even more, we worship and praise. The act of prayer recalibrates our souls. It helps give us perspective beyond our immediate situation and sorrow. And it helps move us from no hope, out of false hope, into the real hope of the Prince of Peace. "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard

your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6)

One last story. A Pastor invited various Church members to the front of the Church and asked them a question: "In your times of discouragement, what is your favourite Bible verse."

A young man said, "That's easy, Psalm 23 vs 1: 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.'"

A middle age woman replied, "Psalm 46 verse 1: 'God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble'."

A recently retired woman gave her answer as: John 16 verses 33-35: "In this world you shall have tribulations, but be of good cheer, I have overcome this world"

Then the Pastor called up John, who was the oldest member of the congregation. This 92 year old man said, "And it came to pass."

Some of the congregation laughed a little or felt embarrassed, thinking that old John's lack of memory was getting the best of him. When the snickering stopped, he said "396 verses in the Bible say; 'and it came to pass.'"

"At 30 I lost my job with six hungry mouths and a wife to feed. I didn't know how I would make it. At 40 my eldest son was killed over seas in the war. It knocked me down. At 50 my house burned to the ground. Nothing was saved out of the house. At 60 my wife of 40 years got cancer. It slowly ate away at her. We cried together many a night on our knees in prayer. At 65 she died. I still miss her today.

"The agony I went through in each of these situations was unbelievable. I wondered where was God. But each time I looked in the Bible I saw one of those 396 verses that said, "And it came to pass." I felt that God was telling me, my pain and my circumstances were also going to pass and that God would get me through it." What we are going through, this too will pass.

David clearly expressed his frustration, then asked for some help and arrived back at faith, worship, and hope. He changed from despair to delight and trust – even without having a clear answer. But he remembered God’s love.

C. S. Lewis, in the book, *A Grief Observed*, wrote, “You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death. It is easy to say you believe a rope to be strong as long as you are merely using it to cord a box. But suppose you had to hang by that rope over a precipice. Wouldn’t you then first discover how much you really trusted it?”

King David gives us an example to follow, of putting faith into action. Belief into practice. Of offering real prayer. And we can discover God to be loving, faithful and good - again! This is where real hope comes from – God Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth.

May we hope that our situation today will come to pass as we read Psalm 13 again, in *The Voice* translation.

How long, O Eternal One?  
How long will You forget me? Forever?  
How long will You look the other way?  
How long must I agonize, grieving Your  
absence in my heart every day?  
How long will You let my enemies win?

Turn back; respond to me, O Eternal, my True  
God!  
Put the spark of life in my eyes, or I’m dead.  
My enemies will boast they have beaten me;  
my foes will celebrate that I have stumbled.

But I trust in Your faithful love;  
my heart leaps at the thought of  
imminent deliverance by You.  
I will sing to the Eternal,  
for He is always generous with me.

### ***Responding with our Whole Hearts...***

Praise and Prayer – (Prayer requests listed in the bulletin and others)

- Prayer for the communities and families impacted by the massacre in Portapique, Nova Scotia. (Prayer written by Rachel Siemens, Pastor of Carman Mennonite Church, Carman, MB)

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.  
Before the mountains were brought forth  
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

We bring you our broken hearts  
and place into your great care  
all of the lives lost in Nova Scotia in this rampage.  
We entrust their souls to your bountiful love  
which knows no end in time or eternity.  
Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.

We weep with those who are weeping.  
Send your Spirit of comfort to the many many people  
who are mourning the death of their mothers and  
fathers, their sons and daughters, their family and  
neighbours, their friends and colleagues.  
Embrace them as their grief is compounded by the  
inability to come together to mourn in person and  
comfort each other with hugs and tears.  
Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.

Grant your strength and your comfort to the many  
people who are working to help in a variety of ways:  
for first responders, investigators, funeral directors,  
mayors and town councils, for pastors and journalists,  
and those whose work goes unnamed.  
Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.

We bring to you our shock, our grief, our fear, our  
outrage;  
“This doesn’t happen in Canada!”  
But this did happen.  
We bring you our loss of innocence.  
As we react and respond to this awful event,  
may we not become cynical and close our hearts to  
others or to you.  
Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.

God of compassion and mercy,  
we offer you our prayer in the strong name of Jesus,  
Our Risen Saviour.

- Please pray for all the charities who have had to cancel some of their fundraising events, so they are running short of funds. They still have staff to pay, facilities to maintain, and people to help. Plus, those who are still working directly with people have increased expenses because of the Covid-19 safety measures. So please - do more than pray. Contribute as God has blessed you.

- Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession  
God our Maker,  
You have walked the Emmaus Road with your faithful people in many generations, people facing challenge and uncertainty, people seeking your purpose and promise. Thank you for your faithfulness to us in all situations.  
Walk with us and with those for whom we pray for this day, that your grace and mercy may sustain our faith and hope.  
God in your mercy, hear our prayers.

We pray for children and young people who must think about the future in uncertain times. Give them hope rooted in the knowledge that their lives matter to you. Show them how to make a difference in the world,  
whatever threats and challenges they face as they grow.  
God in your mercy, hear our prayers.

We pray for people for whom age or experience, illness or disability create barriers to full participation in your world. Give each one a sense of dignity and purpose. Show them where their gifts are needed and how much they matter to you.  
God in your mercy, hear our prayers.

We pray for communities challenged by forces beyond their control: the pandemic, the economic crisis it is creating, environmental collapse, natural disaster, political strife, wars and famine. Give courage to those facing these crises day by day and wisdom to those who lead us through them so that wellbeing may be restored and hope for the future prevail.  
God in your mercy, hear our prayers.

We pray for our congregation, for our life together and our future in mission.  
In a time when we cannot gather in person, sustain our fellowship and strengthen our prayers for one another so that you will find us faithful on our journey into that future. And we pray for the wellbeing of those lives linked to ours who bring us both joy and heartache because they matter so much to us and to you...

God in your mercy, hear our prayers.

God our Maker, hear our prayers, spoken and unspoken, and use us in ways we may not yet even imagine to respond to those around us with the love and mercy we see in Jesus Christ.

### ***Going out to Serve...***

#### Closing and Benediction

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress. Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low, that we may rejoice in your comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

May The LORD bless you and keep you;  
the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;  
the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.  
In Jesus' Name, Amen.