

Christ Church Gabriola

A Collaborative Anglican – United Church

Open to All



Home Church Easter Sunrise Personal Retreat April 12, 2020

Rev. Karen Hollis

Mission Statement

We follow Jesus Christ
Worshipping and Serving with Love and Joy
We open our minds, hearts, and doors to the world.

October 2016

Preparation

~Carve out Time:

Decide on a 2-3 hour block of time, write it into your schedule and honor this commitment you have made to yourself.

~Prepare the Space:

Create a sacred space for your Easter celebration in your home with fresh flowers, a brightly colored cloth, a candle, and any other objects that feel meaningful and complete the space. Make sure there is room in this space for you to sit in stillness and write any reflections which arise. Turn off your phone and your computer; bring to the space the retreat materials, along with a pencil and journal or paper to write on.

Suggested Schedule (approximately 3 hours)

Adjust the times for your own needs (include all the pieces)

~Opening prayer (15)

*~Read the reflections slowly (30) pausing anywhere that feels significant
What Can be Done While Waiting, Heaven on Earth, Logion 77 (Gospel of Thomas), Saying Yes and Saying No, Against Your Absence, Letting Go of the Way Things Used To Be, Risen*

~Lectio Divina (30)

Pray with John 20:1-18 and journal any insights

~Forest Bathing (60)

~Reflection & Blessing (30)

Journal with the reflection questions and name the graces of this time



Opening Prayer

Sit with your eyes closed and feet on the floor. Take a few deep breaths and bring yourself into the present moment. Open yourself to the presence of the Holy Spirit and sit for several minutes, offering gratitude for this day, this time, and naming your intention for this time of retreat.

God of power, God of people,
you are the life of all that lives,
energy that fills the earth,
vitality that brings to birth,
impetus in making whole
whatever is bruised or broken.
In you we grow to know the truth
that sets all creation free.
You are the song the whole earth sings,
the promise liberation brings,
now and forever. Amen.

Readings for Reflection

What Can Be Done While Waiting © Betsey Beckman www.thedancingword.com

You can't force open a bud.
You can pause to marvel at the
petals all tightly packed, compact,
held within, barely emerging from the cloak of green.
But you can't force it open.
You can sit with that bud, and let it know
that you are alive to witness its own aliveness
waiting, brimming to break forth.
You can remind that bud of the long,
many long dark hours it spent deep within the earth,
as a dream, a hope, a whisper, a promise.
With your own long deep breath,
you can remember to that bud
how water is even now drawn up its
very stem to fill the slender stamens sequestered within.
You can sit in silence together
while the sun beams its light on closed quarters,
as if to call – "Lazarus, come forth!"
Quietly, you can recall together the dream of what's to come.
And while you are believing and waiting and believing
sometimes you can spy the almost imperceptible
curl of a petal unfolding
and the glint of color poking out, streaming through. . .

But mostly it will happen when you close your eyes
and open them again: there it will be –
bursting forth in unabashed inexplicable exquisite beauty –
a blossom opening itself so boldly,
so brilliantly, so divinely to the world,
proclaiming such delicate praises before your awe-filled eyes.

Heaven on Earth

from "Grateful Living" by Rev. Dale Turner

When Henry David Thoreau was near death, his friend, Parker Pillsbury, leaned over his bed and whispered, "Do you have any visions of things beyond, David?" Thoreau responded, "One world at a time, Parker, one world at a time."

Jesus would have been in total agreement with Thoreau. Jesus said very little about heaven, but there is hardly a line in which he does not mention our earthly existence. What critics of the Christian religion never seem to understand is that the idea of a future life of some sort, which we commonly call heaven, is only a hope. It is not the central fact of the Christian faith.

The idea that Christians try to lead good lives only to be able to go to heaven is false. The idea that Christianity blinds the eye of its followers and dulls their minds to the brutal facts of this world by presenting them with a lovely picture of the paradise awaiting them is not true. Those who sneer at Christianity because of its other-worldliness have really never understood it.

Far from being interested in some vague paradise that was to come, Jesus was so concerned with this world that he believed and taught that heaven and eternal life were not simply in the future, but started here on earth. Jesus taught that anyone who was willing to accept his way of life on earth, and who lived that way abundantly, could here and now be in the presence of the eternal. This is the central fact of the Christian faith.

Heaven begins on earth for those who are unselfish and caring, who are sensitive to beauty both in nature and in human life, and who live with a consciousness of God's continuous presence.

Eternal life is not a postponed affair that comes after death. It is a way of living in this world which has nothing to do with death.

Easter has little to tell us about what we shall be in the next world, or what the next world is like. Easter's message is for now. It says that life in God is endless and unconquerable. This is the meaning of the Resurrection. It is the final proof of all Jesus had taught his disciples about eternal life.

So deathless was Christ's living that there was no stone heavy enough, no grave deep enough, no seal strong enough, no soldier powerful enough, to kill that kind of life.

When Jesus told the disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you," he did not describe the dimension or the nature of that place, and when he appeared before his disciples after the Resurrection, it was not to tell them of a beautiful heaven which was prepared to receive them sometime in the future. It was to show them that his way of life was deathless, that God's causes are never lost causes, and that there is a kind of life that is endless on earth and beyond the grave.

The disciples, who for a few days before his appearing had been grief-stricken by their loss, suddenly understood that their master's way of life was victorious even over death. They believed anew that they had heard him say: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Gospel of Thomas Logion 77

Translated by Elaine Pagels and Marvin Meyer

Jesus said, "I am the light that is over all things. I am all. From me all came forth, and to me all extends. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."



Saying Yes and Saying No (John 20:11-18)

by Kate Huey

The garden encounter Mary Magdalene experienced is familiar in different ways for us today, when we experience resurrection and new life, when we encounter the risen Christ in our own lives. But there is the other side, too, for "God has said 'yes' to Jesus and 'no' to the powers who killed him," Borg and Crossan write. Even after he is raised, Jesus "continues to bear the wounds of the empire that executed him," and yet, "if Jesus is Lord, the lords of this world are not." And that, Borg and Crossan write, tells us something about God: "Easter means God's Great Clean-up of the world has begun--but it will not happen without us." We may feel very close to Jesus when we imagine ourselves in the

garden, "walking and talking" with our risen Lord as the hymn describes. But following Jesus after that encounter, according to Borg and Crossan, means sharing Jesus' passion for "the kingdom of God, what life would be like on earth if God were king, and the rulers, domination systems, and empires of this world were not. It is the world the prophets dreamed of--a world of distributive justice in which everyone has enough and systems are fair." This beautiful world, Borg and Crossan write, "is God's dream...that can only be realized by being grounded ever more deeply in the reality of God, whose heart is justice. Jesus' passion got him killed. But God has vindicated Jesus. This is the political meaning of Good Friday and Easter" (The Last Week).

That sounds as if there is more for us to do than merely take good news back to the others: it's a call for our whole lives. The world should be able to see in our lives our own passion for the truth that Jesus is risen and that God has begun the "Great Clean-up," the one that won't happen without us. If we go back to our lives tomorrow as if nothing has changed, what then have we really experienced?

Against Your Absence

by Walter Brueggemann

All power, honor, glory be to you!

You . . . sometimes hidden, silent, absent, unresponsive.

We are so privileged that we seldom sense you

hidden, silent, absent, unresponsive.

But we know people who do,

we think of places where you do not appear.

We imagine you defeated,

weak,

held captive.

And we wait a day,

two days,

until the third day.

And then, most often then,

quite reliably then,

you appear then in your full glory.

This day we pray against your absence, silence, and hiddenness.

Come with full power into deathly places,

and we will praise you deep and full. Amen.

Letting Go Of The Way Things Used To Be (John 20:16) by Kate Huey

Barbara Brown Taylor finishes her sermon (in *Home by Another Way*) with a reflection on Mary Magdalene letting go of Jesus, even though we don't really read that she was holding onto him and the way things used to be, before the dreadful events just past. Mary Magdalene calls Jesus "Rabbouni! - "his Friday name, and here it was Sunday, an entirely new day in an entirely new life. He was not on his way back to her and the others. He was on his way to God, and he was taking the whole world with him." While Taylor claims that resurrection is unnatural, so is the truth that it reveals this "happy morning," the new life within us, planted by God, new life that "cannot be killed, and if we can remember that then there is nothing we cannot do: move mountains, banish fear, love our enemies, change the world. The only thing we cannot do is hold on to him...." Instead, we must "let him take us where he is going....into the white hot presence of God, who is not behind us but ahead of us, every step of the way."

This was the moment that changed the world, and, hopefully, our expectations, even today, two thousand years later. Thomas Long describes the new way things are in the light of resurrection: "The way the world used to be, if something troubling got in the way, like a call for racial justice or a worker for peace or an advocate for mercy, the world could just kill it and it would be done with. But Jesus is alive, and righteousness, mercy, and peace cannot be dismissed with a cross or a sword." Where are you "in this new and frightening resurrection world"? (Matthew, Westminster Bible Companion). Where does your church stand in this resurrection world? What will you do?



Risen

For Easter Day

If you are looking
for a blessing,
do not linger
here.

Here
is only
emptiness,
a hollow,
a husk
where a blessing
used to be.

This blessing
was not content
in its confinement.

It could not abide
its isolation,
the unrelenting silence,
the pressing stench
of death.

So if it is
a blessing
you seek,
open your own
mouth.

Fill your lungs
with the air
this new
morning brings

and then
release it
with a cry.

Hear how the blessing
breaks forth
in your own voice,

how your own lips
form every word
you never dreamed
to say.

See how the blessing
circles back again,
wanting you to
repeat it,
but louder,

how it draws you,
pulls you,
sends you
to proclaim
its only word:

Risen.
Risen.
Risen.

Jan Richardson

Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading)

Choose **a few verses** from the following selection from the Gospel of John and use them to do the *Lectio Divina* practice below.

John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out

of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Preparation:

Take some time to become fully present to the moment. Close your eyes and become conscious of your breathing. Place your hand on your own belly. Feel your stomach slowly rise and fall. Draw your attention down into your belly and see if you can begin to notice what movement is happening there. Sit in silence for several minutes quieting your mind and imagine your own blossoming within. What is the shape of the blossom sprouting deep in your belly? What are the colours you notice? What is the fragrance? What is the invitation calling you to new growth in this season

First Reading: READING – Lectio (Listening for God's Address)

What is the word or phrase calling to me?

In your initial encounter with the "text" listen for a word or phrase that 'shimmers', beckons, addresses you, unnerves you, disturbs you, stirs you, seems especially ripe with meaning. Repeat this word to yourself in the silence.

Second Reading: RECEIVING – Meditatio (Receiving God's Address)

What are the memories, images, and feelings being stirred within me? Gently repeating the word or phrase to yourself, allowing it to interact with the feelings, images, memories, and symbols that come to you during this time. Allow the word or phrase that has spoken to you to unfold in your imagination and speak even more deeply.

Third Reading: RESPONDING – Oratio (Responding to God's Address)

What is my invitation in this moment of my life? How am I being called to respond?

Allow your whole being to become prayer by the honest expression of your deepest thoughts, feelings, and desires in dialogue with God. Attend to the way this word, phrase, feeling or image connects with the context and situation of your life right now. How does it relate to what you have heard and seen this day? How does it connect with what is happening at home, at work, in your leisure time?

Take an extended time of exploring this connection (In thought, in a journal, in art, in movement) How is God present to you there? Is God calling you to anything in your present circumstances? Is there a challenge presented here?

Contemplative Silence: RESTING – Contemplatio (Beholding God's beauty)

A time for simply resting in God and offering gratitude for God's presence

Reflection and Journaling: Close with some time to reflect in writing about what has emerged during your prayer. You might want to write down the word or phrase, the images which unfolded, and the invitation you experienced.

Excerpted & Adapted from *Lectio Divina: Contemplative Awakening and Awareness*
© Christine Valters Paintner & Lucy Wynkoop, OSB (Paulist Press 2008)

Forest Bathing (shinrin-yoku)

This moving meditation was inspired by ancient Shinto and Buddhist practices first popularized in Japan. The main goal is to experience the natural world through all five senses: Listening, seeing, touching, smelling, and tasting . We are fortunate that Eastertide coincides with spring time, when the forest is expressing the newness of life; it is a wonderful time to notice the different colours of the flowering plants and on the wide range of shades and tones of green as new plant growth emerges. The spring forest is full of different scents, textures

and sounds, and the salmonberries will soon be ready to eat. Early morning and evening are great times to forest bath, since the air is moister and more fragrant, and the sounds of the forest are easier to hear.

Here's what to do:

- 1) Breathe deeply and slowly the fresh oxygen from the trees
- 2) practice using each of your senses, one at a time, e.g., see (not look), feel (not touch) listen (not hear), savour (not taste),
- 3) Notice the colours, shapes, sizes and textures in the forest.
- 4) Begin by absorbing the 'big picture' and then gradually zoom in to observe the details.

~ Thanks to Rob Brockley for these resources

Creating with Nature: As you walk along, practicing with your senses, you might notice things like twigs, leaves, stones along your path that seem to call to you for more attention, but resist the urge to break off living things such as flowers from their stems or leaves off branches.

When you come to a place with a bit of a clearing on the ground, or perhaps a wide and flat stone upon which to create, or a fallen log, lay out your materials there. Allow some time to simply play with arranging the objects in various ways.

You might stack up a series of stones in the form of a cairn, or arrange the items in a circle to form a mandala. Just notice what feels satisfying, without any judgment. This is a time to play and explore. Give thanks for this time of playing and creating with the forest and, leave your creation to be a blessing to others and be scattered by nature.



Reflection & Blessing

~What are you discovering in this season of Eastertide?

~If your soul is not in its own season of Easter, how can you honour both the resurrection and your own season of life, without trying to change anything?

~Mary Oliver asks the question: "Are you breathing just a little and calling it a life?" How are you being called to practice resurrection in the season ahead?

~What are your prayers (or what are you contemplating) this season? How are you called to action?

~What signs of new life did you find in the forest? do you see in your own life?

~What are the graces of your personal retreat?

Blessing

That you may know
your own life as a sacred text.
That God will lead you
to read your story anew.
That you may see how the holy
inhabits each line
and breaths across every page.

~ Jan Richardson

