

Quispamsis United Church
April 28, 2024 - Fifth Sunday in Easter
Community Connections
Sophia Recovery Centre
Liturgical Colour: White
Director of Music: Stephen Alexander
Reader: Cindy Millican

Centering Thought: *To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.*

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

GATHERING TOGETHER

Gathering Chord

Introit: Hey Now! Singing Hallelujah! MV 121 Refrain x2
Hey Now! Singing Hallelujah!
Hey now! The morning has come!
Hey Now! Singing Hallelujah!
The tomb was empty at the rising sun.

Opening Music... An Invitation to Prayer and Candle Lighting

Welcome and Lighting of the Christ Candle

Lighting of Affirm Candle & Acknowledgment of Territories

Celebrations

Call to Worship (Responsive)

Welcome, beloved community, to this sacred space, where healing begins, and hope is nurtured.

In the embrace of this gathering, we find strength in unity and solace in shared understanding.

Let us rejoice in the resilience of the human spirit and celebrate the journeys of recovery that grace this sanctuary.

With hearts open wide and spirits lifted high, we honor the courage it takes to face adversity and choose renewal.

In the face of challenges, we discover our inner strength, and in the depths of despair, we uncover seeds of resilience.

For every struggle faced is a testament to our capacity to overcome, and every step forward is a triumph of the human spirit.

Let us lift our voices in gratitude, For the support of this community that uplifts and empowers.

With gratitude, we acknowledge the blessings of companionship, And the gift of unconditional love that binds us together.

Today, we gather not as victims of circumstance, But as warriors of hope, champions of our own destinies.

With faith as our compass and love as our armor, we journey forward, guided by the light of possibility.

So let us rejoice and be glad in this moment, for in this sanctuary, we find strength, renewal, and endless possibility. May our worship be a celebration of life, love, and the strong human spirit. Amen.

Gathering Prayer (Unison)

We gather in your presence today with hearts brimming with gratitude and hope. We come together as a community bound by our shared commitment to healing and renewal.

In this sacred space, we acknowledge the challenges we face. Yet, we also recognize the strength that resides within each of us – a strength that is amplified when we come together in unity and support.

We give thanks for the courage that fills this room, for the resilience that shines in every soul present. Help us to see the beauty in our collective struggle, knowing that it is through our trials that we find the seeds of our triumphs.

May the light of your love guide us, knowing that in your presence, we find comfort, strength, and hope.

Illuminate our paths with your wisdom and surround us with your unwavering grace. Help us to lean on one another, to lift each other up in times of need, and to celebrate every victory, no matter how small.

May we never lose sight of the infinite possibilities that lie before us. With faith as our compass and love as our guide, we walk boldly into the future, knowing that with you by our side, all things are possible.

In your holy name, we pray. Amen

Opening Hymn:

Let Us Build a House

MV 1

**Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live,
A place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:**

Refrain

All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

**Let us build a house where prophets speak, and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus: R**

**Let us build a house where love is found in water, wine and wheat;
a banquet hall on holy ground, where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus, is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us: R**

**Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger: R**

**Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace; |
et this house proclaim from floor to rafter: R**

Time for All Ages

Prayer of Reflection

Loving God, you know our innermost beings and cherish us as a mother cherishes her young. Today as we hear about the things in our life that hold us captive and enslave us, we ask that you forgive us for passing judgement on ourselves and others. May we all find ways to listen, to be present, to simply 'be' with one another through your love for us. **Amen.**

Words of Assurance

People of God be assured that you are loved , forgiven and accepted. The one who created you will nurture you and will never leave you nor forsake you -Receive this promise as your own for it is offered to you in grace. **Amen**

Readings: 1 John 4: 7-21

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

John 15:1-8

'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Response to Scripture **Glory to God in the Highest** **MV 124 (2x)**
Glory to God in the highest and peace to God's people on earth.
Glory to God in the highest and peace to God's people on earth.

The Gift of Music: **On Eagles Wings**

Introduction to Sophia Recovery Centre : Heather McDonald

Presentation by Sophia Recovery

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Hymn: **Come And Seek the Ways of Wisdom** **MV 10**
Come and seek the ways of Wisdom,
she who danced when earth was new.
Follow closely what she teaches,
for her words are right and true.
Wisdom clears the path to justice,
Showing us what love must do.

Listen to the voice of Wisdom,
crying in the market-place.
Hear the Word made flesh among us,
full of glory, truth, and grace.
When the word takes root and ripens,
peace and righteousness embrace.

Sister Wisdom, come, assist us;
nurture all who seek rebirth.
Spirit guide and close companion,
bring to light our sacred worth.
Free us to become your people,
holy friends of God and earth.

Life and Work of the Church

Sharing of Gifts and Talents

Offertory Dedication Hymn:

Doxology

VU 440 (Vs 5)

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
In heaven above and earth below;
One God, three persons we adore-
Be praises given for evermore**

Prayer

Lord, we stand in awe of your infinite sacrifice. You gave your beloved son, Jesus, for our salvation. As we give our gifts of time, service and offerings please help us to remember that our sacrifices, no matter how small, are echoes of your great love for us. We ask your blessing on all that we give so that our giving can reflect your selfless love. **Amen**

Introduction to Prayers of the People

And When You Call for Me

MV 96 (2x)

**And when you call for me, I have already answered.
And when you call for me, I am already there.**

Prayers of the People & Lord's Prayer

Holy God, you came to us as one who walked the journey with friends. As a servant you healed and touched lives, washed the feet of your closest, welcomed the marginalized and stood against hate when so many reviled you.

Today we pray and ask your blessing on the work of Sophia Recovery Centre. Strengthen the staff and volunteers to love in patience, without judgement and help them to stand strong against those who ridicule and do not understand. We ask a blessing on everyone involved with the Centre and ask that your Spirit may go with them into the future as they prepare a new sanctuary, safe place, and meeting centre.

Today we pray for people and families who are impacted by addiction. Help us in our congregation to be a strong presence that directs people towards help and programs available to help. Teach us that transformation is possible. As we take time to pray for families in our community, our province, and our world we pray also for those in leadership. The policy makers and stakeholders in senior positions. We pray for an outpouring of your compassion towards them so that it may transform them and enact change.

We pray today for those in our community that need your blessing. As we name them now and follow with silence those that are in our minds, we thank you that when ever two or more are gathered you are in our midst.

Jesus, you walked with us and in your presence, we can find peace. Thank you for the promise you have given that we are never alone. We pray that we may become more like you in being your body and presence in a world needing this reassurance.

In all things we thank you, Jesus, Our brother on our journey who taught us to pray this prayer together.. .

The Lord's Prayer

SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn:

It Only Takes a Spark

VU 289

**It only takes a spark to get a fire going,
and soon all those around can warm up in its glowing:
that's how it is with God's love,
once you've experienced it:
you spread God's love to everyone,
you want to pass it on.**

**What a wondrous time is spring when all the trees are budding,
the birds begin to sing, the flowers start their blooming;
that's how it is with God's love,
once you've experienced it:
you want to sing, it's fresh like spring,
you want to pass it on.**

**I wish for you, my friend, this happiness that I've found -
on God you can depend, it matters not where you're bound;
I'll shout it from the mountain top;
I want my world to know:
the Lord of love has come to me,
I want to pass it on.**

Commissioning (Responsive)

Spirit of God we thank you for the gracious and heartfelt testimonies of the women of Sophia Recovery Centre today. Your grace and love is evident in their vision and mission.

As we leave today we ask that you give us vision and a deeper mission to love in your name .

Spirit of God go with us as we return to our homes, our work and our community and enliven us to share your goodness.

We go in Christ's name willing to give and willing to serve. Amen.

Benediction

Now may the love of God surround you, offer you hope, keep you in peace, and guide you in the ways of wisdom. **Amen**

Choral Closing

Christ Has No Body Now But Yours

MV 171 (Refrain 2x)

Christ has no body now but yours, no hands but yours.

Here on this earth, yours is the work,

To serve with the joy of compassion.

Closing Music: Our Refuge and Strength - Donald F. Callender