

South Elkhorn Christian Church

Digital Liturgy

EASTERTIDE
April 26, 2020

PREPARE

Locate a candle to light and communion elements to use (bread/juice or whatever is available to you).

Find a quiet place by yourself or with others.

Read through the instructions, prayers, scripture, and questions below. You can also find a guided, voice-led version of this digital liturgy at southelkhorncc.org/digital-liturgy

WELCOME THE LIGHT

Welcome to worship with South Elkhorn Christian Church. Light a candle if you are able and receive these words:

CALL TO WORSHIP

Christ will meet us wherever we are.

He is risen, indeed!

Christ is with us on the road, at the table.

He is risen, indeed!

Easter is not over...

He is risen, still!

CENTERING & LORD'S PRAYER

God here we are, walking this uncertain and new journey of life.

A path that we have never taken before.

We do not know where it will lead us,

We do not know what to expect

We do not know the destination, but we do know that you walk beside us, and you are our constant companion.

As we walk this road,

Help us to recognize you among us. For you are everywhere.

When we get distracted, help us to be aware of the ways you are speaking to us.

Help us turn our attention back to you.

May we use this time inside our homes, to deeply look within ourselves.

To grow, to change, to transform.

Open our eyes to your presence, your guidance, and your love.

And as we walk with you, help us to see with your eyes,

to walk in faith and to be filled with hope.

Help us to see others with a vision of love,

Fill us with your compassion.

Keep us connected to you and to each other.

Though the journey is unknown, we thank you that you walk beside us.

Awaken our hearts, open our eyes, fill us with your spirit,

and may we trust in you always, this day and forever more.

And now may we come together to say the prayer that you taught us saying:

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 sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 24:13-35

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.”

Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the

road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

SERMON

I want you to imagine Jesus. If you can, close your eyes and picture Jesus in your mind... what is he doing? [pause]

What moment or activity from his life so defines him it's the first thing that comes to mind when you picture Jesus?

Is it Jesus crucified, suffering, hanging from a cross, bearing the weight of a broken and sin-ridden world?

Is it Jesus risen, mysteriously present outside the empty tomb in the power of God's love?

Is it the child, Jesus, swaddled and embraced by a manger and a waiting world?

Is it Jesus the teenager, rebelliously ducking away from his parents to hang at the temple?

Is it Jesus the teacher, instructing and clarifying the life of faith to a large and eager crowd?

Is it Jesus the healer, reaching out to cleanse, comfort, and reconnect the sick and dispossessed?

Is it Jesus the prophet, confronting and challenging and out-maneuvering the powerful on the streets or in the temple?

When is Jesus most Jesus?

A few months ago I was at swim lessons with my children. As they swam I watched them from afar behind a big glass wall with many other parents. The door beside me opened and I looked up. I would have quickly returned my attention to the backstrokes and treading of my children except... except something about this person who walked through the door was oddly familiar. I thought to myself, “I know him... what was his name? Where did we cross paths before?”

He hadn't noticed me, but he did notice someone else in the room, and his face lit up with

a bright smile. He sauntered over to his friend, gave a big handshake that turned into a one-armed man-hug, and that's when it hit me: "Jimmy!" His smile, exuberance, and way of walking triggered my memory--it was distinctive, defining, and my memory opened, my recognition reactivated: yes, Jimmy, now older, laden with children, but still Jimmy, the big-smiled, big-spirited fellow football player from college.

I wonder if that's what it was like for the two road travelers that day, interrupted on their walk by someone who was strangely familiar...Who was this person, where had they crossed paths before?... they couldn't quite place him, this fellow traveler on the road to Emmaus. At least, not until he did that thing, that one thing that jogged their memory, that made everything click, that reactivated their recognition... that one thing that was perhaps Jesus being most Jesus...

Jesus was most Jesus at the table. In Luke's gospel we read how Jesus is subversive at the table, labeled a troublemaker for eating and drinking with those stigmatized and rejected as "sinners." He's even called a drunkard and glutton. Jesus disrupts the power games and social self-promotion that often took place around the dinner table. He confronts guests and hosts, challenging them not to jockey for the most prominent seat, but the least. Jesus is stunningly inclusive at the dinner table. He encourages the poor, the always uninvited, the sick and overlooked, those beyond the protective city walls, everyone to come for dinner. When a crowd who comes to hear Jesus teach stays late gets a little hungry, Jesus brings the table to them, all of them, every last one of them, in a table-moment of fish and loaves and unfathomable abundance. Jesus even makes the dinner table an image, the image for the Kingdom of God, the heavenly realm, the banquet feast of world-transforming love... it's at the dinner table where Jesus breaks bread and offers the cup, not only to Peter, James, John, Thomas and the beloved Disciple in the upper room on that last night before his death, but also for Judas, the very one who would betray him and catalyze his arrest and crucifixion.

Beside the dinner table, Jesus washes the feet of his disciples in a shocking act of servant leadership and forgiving, transforming love.

It's at the table that Jesus makes his death take on a new meaning, a new hope, a new trajectory; encoded in simple, everyday items: bread, cup.

It's curious, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, they don't recognize Jesus when he shows up, not even when he starts teaching them, unpacking the scriptures for them in ways that might be characteristically Jesus, ways that help them see that all these wild and wondrous events are a continuation of God's saving action, healing, and

new-world-making. No, even though their hearts are burning within them, they still don't recognize him... it's not his teaching, but his presence at the table that does it...

Only then, when he breaks the bread, when he blesses it and when he gives it to them, only then does it happen. They remember him. That's it, that's him, that's Jesus.

Jesus is made known in his presence, in the breaking of bread around an ordinary, everyday, travelers table.

Which is, of course, meant to provoke the church, the church which gathers around the holy table, the Lord's table, to bless and break the bread in his name... and remember... remember because we trust that Christ is present at this table too.

At the table, Jesus is still doing what is most Jesus: inviting us all to slow down and pull up a seat; to share an equal place setting. Jesus is still doing what is most Jesus by expanding the artificially shortened guest list expanding it to include those who are labeled by others as not-yet-ready, unwelcome, or even "sinners." Jesus is still doing what is most Jesus at the table, challenging us all to put our self-interest and self-promotion aside for the sake of others. Jesus is doing what is most Jesus at the table, embracing us all and the hidden shame we can't seem to shake, opening the mystery of God to us all, reimagining the world for us with God's own love, reconnecting us all to one another in ways we've forgotten and resisted, strengthening us all for a life of hope, healing and surprising joy.

Jesus is most Jesus at the table. This is why the open table matters. This is why we practice the open table at South Elkhorn--a table where all are invited, no matter what. No matter religious background, political party, gender, ethnicity, or sexual identity; no matter age or race, education level or mental competence--no matter how much or little you believe in any particular dogma, no matter how much or how little you've read the bible (or understood it!), no matter how much or how little time you've spent in church, no matter how much or how little you've been wounded and hurt by a church...

No minister, Elder, or church opened the table. Jesus did. No minister, Elder, or church can close the table to anyone because no minister, Elder, or church hosts the table. Jesus does.

So all are welcome. Full stop. Every traveler, no matter how weary, wounded, or wondering...

The table isn't a reward for faith, it's the beginning of it. The table isn't reserved for holy people, it is holy because it is accessible to all people.

Which seems especially relevant today, when we are sheltering in place at home, dislocated from the church table we might normally gather around in a church building. It's seemingly inaccessible. But it's not. Because no church table contains and confines "the table, the holy table." South Elkhorn's table isn't holy because it is in a church, because it is etched with certain sayings or decorated with certain colors or blessed by a clergy person... no it is holy because it is an open table, it is open to all people and people are opened up.

Any table can become the holy table, any table can become the open table.

Humans, not God, close down; humans, not God and close ourselves off—we close down and close ourselves off from ourselves, from one another and from God. Jesus opens us up again, Jesus opens us out to one another and to God.

Jesus is most Jesus at the table.

And so you don't have to be in church to experience the holy table. More difficult than getting into a church these days may be opening ourselves up, to our anxious, grieving, worn-out, uncertain, exasperated, and home-weary selves we've been working hard to ignore, numb, and take for granted; more difficult than getting into a church these days may be truly opening ourselves to the best ways to love our neighbors and the increasing needs of our community; more difficult than getting into a church these days may be opening ourselves to God... opening up before whatever table in our home, and trusting God will still meet us there, still forgive us there, still strengthen us there, still enliven us there, still make us new.

Jesus remains most Jesus at the table, opening the table to all, opening us up to ourselves, to one another and to God. And Jesus, as he did on the road to Emmaus, can surprise any table.

Yes, Christ is risen, indeed, especially when the bread is broken, blessed, and shared, wherever you are, just as you are, with everyone you are with.

Easter isn't over, indeed never ends, because we can yet again embrace the openness of the table, and Jesus is most Jesus there.

COMMUNION

Place before you bread and a cup of juice (or whatever you have on hand to use). If you are with others, serve one another with the blessing, “The bread of life, the cup of hope.”

The Lord be with you,

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

The communion elements before you unite us in Christ’s Spirit one to another. Christ’s life, death, and resurrection unite us to God’s infinite and all-inclusive Love. All are welcome to the Table, and all are invited to remember...

THE BREAD

“The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it...”

Hold the bread and, if possible, break it.

“...and said, ‘This is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me.’”

THE CUP

Hold the cup. If you have not already, pour juice (or whatever you have on hand) into the cup.

“After supper, Jesus took the cup saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.’”

PRAYER

Gracious and Loving God, You have made us for connection. In this time of separation and isolation send to us your Spirit. That we might experience your sustaining presence and be encouraged with hope through the fellowship of your love. Amen.

Receive and prayerfully enjoy the bread and the cup.

GENEROSITY

Prayerfully consider someone to reach out to with a word of love, encouragement, or prayer. Write a card. Make a phone call. Or identify a time to do so today (or in the week ahead).

Tithes and offerings can be mailed to South Elkhorn or you can give online at

southelkhorncc.org/give

CHANGING THE LIGHT

Now it is time to change the light. The light that was in one place at one time, is now in all places at all times.

In this very room and everywhere we go. And all God's children said, Amen.

Extinguish the candle and watch the smoke rise.

UPDATES

Visit southelkhorncc.org/blog to learn the latest on worship, building usage, and more.

Digital Worship & Wonder videos available at southelkhorncc.org/worship-wonder.

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