

**UNRAVELLED--SEEKING GOD
WHEN THE UNIMAGINABLE HAPPENS
The Ninth Sunday After Pentecost
August 2, 2020
10:30 A.M.**

*Crescent Fort Rouge is a safe place for all people to worship regardless of race, creed, age, ability, cultural background, sexual orientation or gender expression
Our mission is to invite all who would join us, to celebrate the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, through worship, music, fellowship and outreach, to help us build a fairer and more joyful world*

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF TERRITORY

We gather for work and worship on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, and Dakota nations, and the homeland of the Metis people. Long before adventurers, colonizers, settlers, refugees, or immigrants from other places came to the place we call Manitoba, the people of Canada's first nations held this land as a sacred trust from the Creator. They offered assistance to the first travelers to this place and shared their knowledge for survival in what was at times a harsh climate. May our relationships as settlers and Original Peoples be based in honour and deep respect.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

Marc: God is light, in whom there is no darkness at all.

There is nothing hidden, that will not be revealed.

We light this flame to affirm that new light
is ever waiting to break through
to enlighten our ways:

That new truth is ever waiting
to break through to illumine our minds,
and that new love is ever waiting
to break through to warm our hearts.

May we be open to this light,
and to the rich possibilities that it brings us.

Deep calls unto deep,
life calls unto life,
light calls unto light.

We are a rainbow people, and in all our diversity
Christ's light shines through us, making us one

Here is God's good kin-dom!

OPENING WORDS

So much in life is unpredictable.

Life begins and ends.

The weather changes.

Love surprises us.

Some doors close.

Others open.

Life is unpredictable,
but God never abandons us or forsakes us.

God wants full and abundant life for us, and whether
we are the low achievers who need uplifting,
the timid who need encouraging,
the clumsy who need correcting,
the proud who need humbling,
the rebellious who need recapturing,
the lost who need much saving,
or the faithful who need a smile of approval,
we can our questions and concerns
our doubts and our wonderings,
our fears and our faithfulness
to the God of hope and life.

OPENING PRAYER “The Kiss of Life”—*Bruce Prewer, adapted*

Come through our locked doors,
you persistent lover,
come where we're hiding
and blow away our cover.

Come through disbelief,
enter and greet us,
with disruptive peace
come in and meet us.

Come in the doubting
when old fears molest,
come with your own breath
that we may know rest.

Come with your Spirit,
to lives sour and stale,
breathe forth your Spirit
that we may be hale.

Come with forgiveness
like no one has dared,
breathe in us your grace
that it may be shared.

Come in the evening
with your breath of peace
breathe on your people
that nightmares may cease.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

Marc: What happens when our world falls apart? How do we press onward when our tightly-knit plans unravel into loose threads? What do we become when our identity—or the path we're on—comes undone? What if all of this is not the end we fear it will be?

In our unraveling, sometimes life surprises us with unexpected joy, love, and hope—with a new beginning we couldn't have imagined. Sometimes we need God to unravel us, for we long to be changed.

WE HEAR AND REFLECT ON THE GOOD NEWS

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE READING

Sometimes unraveling leads us to our deepest pain. Jesus dies, leaving Thomas and the rest of the disciples alone. Thomas isolates himself from the disciples, perhaps plunged deep into despair and grief. After all of his worst fears have finally come true, Thomas is too blinded by hopelessness to believe in Jesus' return. Yet, his despair unravels when he touches Jesus' wounds and can finally see, and believe in, God's presence.

READING—John 20:19-29

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side.

Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

²⁴But Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe."

²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

WE REFLECT

WE RESPOND IN FAITH

A READING -Thomas Troeger

These things did Thomas count as real:
the warmth of blood, the chill of steel,
the grain of wood, the heft of stone,
the last frail twitch of flesh and bone.

The vision of his skeptic mind
was keen enough to make him blind
to any unexpected act
too large for his small world of fact.

His reasoned certainties denied
that one could live when one had died,
until his fingers read like Braille
the markings of the spear and nail.

May we, O God, by grace believe
And thus the risen Christ receive,
whose raw, imprinted palms reach out -
and beckoned Thomas from his doubt.

INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP John O'Donohue, *Anam Cara*, adapted

Jesus is among us, offering us new life and hope.

Nothing can prevent God's love for us.

We have been made new in Christ.

“The soul... is the place where the imagination lives.

The imagination is the creative force in the individual.

It always negotiates different thresholds and
releases possibilities of recognition and creativity
which the linear, controlling, external mind
will never even glimpse.

The imagination works on the threshold
that runs between light and dark,
visible and invisible,
quest and question,
possibility and fact.

The imagination is the great friend of possibility.

Where the imagination is awake and alive
fact never hardens or closes but remains open,
inviting us to new thresholds
of possibility and creativity.

A READING ‘Progressive Hymn’—*Andrew Pratt*

When life juggles with our learning,
with the things we thought secure,
then it seems the artist’s palette
spins and faith becomes obscure.

In the wash of different colours,
as we seek for shape and form,
others paint their faith by numbers
forcing God to fit some norm.

But when life has torn the canvas,
when the numbers twist and slip;
then we need to find an image
that will help our hope to grip:

holding us, when we're past holding,
grounding when we're insecure,
till we find a faith, not drifting,
still dynamic, free, yet sure.

A VIDEO—*Peace Like A River*

PRAYER

Generous God, we thank you for your presence with us
in all our lives.

We remember the many times we have doubted and feared,
and yet you have breathed new life into us.

We remember when the music died away and
we were faced with the challenges of a new day –
and we wondered whether we had the heart
to keep going.

We remember when the way ahead seemed unclear
and so much was changing around and within us...

We remember when we wondered
whether we had the imagination to keep hoping.

We remember when the pain and struggles
of our hurting world caught at our throats
and drew us into despair...

And we remember when into our weariness
new life was breathed
and into our helplessness fresh dreams were poured,
and we rose upon wings like eagles.
We ran and no longer felt tired.

We need to remember, O God,
that resurrection is not just a mysterious event
that once happened long ago.

We need to know - to live -
the truth of resurrection for ourselves,
and for our world, daily.

And so we pray that we and our world
may recognise and embrace the little resurrections
that are always all around us,
and may we give ourselves to be
life-carriers wherever we are able.

Where lives are lost because human greed
and power-mongering drive people into poverty and war
may resurrection be found
in simplicity, generosity and peace-making.

Where people are imprisoned by the sickness in their bodies
or in the hearts of those who enslave them,
may resurrection be found
in community, in compassion,
and in our constant striving for freedom for all.

Where women and men are kept from abundant life
through unjust policies and unequal opportunities,
may resurrection be found
in gracious laws and open doors.

Where the earth and its creatures are destroyed
through expediency and carelessness,
may resurrection be found
in honouring all life and in mindful living.

And so, wherever life may seem to be lost,
may we remain people of hope,
of justice and of grace
and may we become skilled at seeing and unleashing
your little resurrections.

These things we ask in the name of Jesus,
who taught us to pray, saying...

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil:**

**For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

WORDS OF BLESSING AND SENDING

FINAL WORDS

Within every kernel of doubt,
there is a tree of life and hope.

In those times when our faith falters,
when we cannot bring ourselves to see t
he presence of the Holy among us,
God takes our faith and transforms it,
patiently showing us the many ways
Christ walks among us.

Look around you:
as close as your own beating heart,
and in the eyes of your nearest neighbour,
grace abounds at the heart of all life.

You are all God's children,
loved without condition,
go in that peace. **Amen.**