

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 16th, 2023



CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

140 Russell Avenue
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1

Church: 905-685-8294

www.christlutheransc.ca

Office Hours: Tuesday to Friday—9 a.m. – 12 noon
Bulletin Announcements: Please send to secretary@christlutheransc.ca.
Deadline for submission is Thursday at 9 a.m.

Pastor: Pastor Todd Hoeffs (289-362-0113) pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com
Parish Assistant: Louise Gondosch (905-329-8579) parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca
Business Manager: Karen McCumber business.manager@christlutheransc.ca
Secretary: Pat Kimpel secretary@christlutheransc.ca
Facebook: Lisa Gall www.facebook.com/ChristLutheranChurchSC
Bulletin by email: Judy Mason chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca

A recording of Sunday's service will be uploaded to YouTube at:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpING_TKT19c_OIBbMqGwLw

Prayer: Grant, Almighty God, that we who have celebrated the mystery of the Lord's resurrection may by the help of Your grace bring forth the fruits thereof in our life and conduct; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



April 2023 Worship Schedule
 April 16 - 2nd Easter Gospel Melodies Service of the Word
 April 23 - 3rd Easter Communion LSB Setting One
 April 30 - 4th Easter/Good Shepherd Sunday Morning Praise

DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:

Monday: 11 Tim. 1: 6-10 Wednesday: 1 Pet. 1: 22-25 Friday: 1 Pet. 1: 3-9
Tuesday: 11 Tim. 2: 1-5 Thursday: 1 Tim. 1: 12-17 Saturday: Jonah 2: 1-11

Musician: 10 a.m. – Mayumi Munoz
Reader: 10 a.m. – Chris Mason
Greeters: 10 a.m. – Heather Turner and Donna Huffman

EVENTS THIS WEEK:

Today: 9:10 am – Confirmation
10:00 am – Worship – “Easter Gospel Melodies Service of the Word”
Monday: 10-11 a.m. – Luther Manor Bible Study
1:30 p.m. – Sewing for Haiti
Tuesday: 9:30 a.m. – Precious Moments
7:00 p.m. – Mary Martha with Speaker: Jude Mersereau
Wednesday: 7:00 p.m. – Church Council Meeting
Thursday: 10:00 a.m. – SOUL
7:15 p.m. – Women’s Bible Study

HAITI LUTHERAN MISSION SOCIETY AGM: Sunday, April 16, 3 p.m., at Pilgrim Lutheran Church, 1054 Upper Sherman Ave, Hamilton, ON L8V 3N5. All are welcome to attend to learn more about our mission in Haiti.

PRECIOUS MOMENTS: If you or someone you know would benefit from friendly conversation, a time for kids to play & sing; hear a Bible story and make a craft - please join us Tuesdays in the nursery area from 9:30 to 11 a.m. Coffee and tea are always on.

MARY MARTHA: The following is our Mary Martha Schedule for our Winter/Spring program.

(more details will follow):

April 18th -- Speaker-Jude Mersereau

May 16th -- Bible Study--Pastor Todd (tentative)

June 10th – Potluck

Please feel free to attend any or all of our Tuesday night events!

CHURCH COUNCIL: April's Church meeting has been changed to **Wednesday, April 19, 7:00 p.m.**

LUTHER MANOR AGM: Wednesday, April 26 at 7:00 pm in the common room at Luther Manor. Luther Manor is a not-for-profit that offers quality, affordable housing to medically independent seniors. If you are interested in becoming a member of the corporation or serving on the Board of Directors, please speak to Mark McCumber or Don Fretz.

YOUTH & CONFIRMAND EVENT:

Saturday, April 29: Games Night at Luther Manor. We will meet at the church at 6:45 p.m. to prep then head over to Luther Manor for 7 pm. Let Louise know if you can make cookies, muffins or squares for this event.

As always friends are welcome to join us! More information on these April events will be emailed or speak with Louise (905-329-8579)

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY: Thursday, April 30, 7:15 p.m. at the church. We will continue our study on Romans 8. Please feel free to join us & bring your Bible!



They may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified. Isaiah 61: 3

Where: Peace Lutheran Church, 60 Young St., Tillsonburg, ON

When: May 6th, 2023 beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Cost: Registration including morning coffee and lunch - **\$40.00**

Need assistance with registration: Call Janice Buchner at 519-866-3754; OR Diana Grant

at 905-431-9826



Free Family Day Bowling

Saturday, June 3rd

2-4 p.m.

Please sign up by the end of this month so we can reserve the venue for all, more details to follow

You can also email: secretary@christlutheransc.ca

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL: Mark your calendars for VBS. **In-person VBS** is being planned this summer **Monday, July 17 to Friday, July 21.** The program will run in the morning with an afternoon extended care for Grade 1-6. Registration forms and Volunteer forms are in narthex.

Last Sunday Attendance: *April 9th, 2023 Attn: 10 a.m. – 226 SOUL: 32*

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Weekly Need</u>	<u>Last Sunday</u>	<u>Year To Date</u>	<u>+ or - (--)</u>
Current:	297,841.00	5,840.02	8,367.90	71,839.51	(14,076.16)
LCC Missions	17,000.00	333.33	152.00	4,986.00	82.15
Property Improvement:			106.00	1,818.00	

A MEMORIAL DONATION has been given to SOUL in memory of John Mewhinney by Ray Anderson.

EASTER COLOURING CONTEST: Thank you to everyone who entered their wonderful art work to help beautify our narthex for Easter. The winners were:

Sunday School: Diesel Rapp

Youth: Grace Rapp

SOUL: Claudine

Adult: John Gondosch

FLOWERS have been placed on altar this morning to the glory of God by James & Wendy Hyatt.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU to all who gave of their time and talents for the fantastic Easter breakfast last Sunday. The food was delicious and "better than restaurant quality" as mentioned by many. Every detail covered, down to real butter and real maple syrup. The meal attracted over 200 people, as did the Sunday service prior. A wonderful celebration for all. Again, many, many thanks!

GOOD NEWS (from Pastor John): "Kareem and Hamida have an interview in Athens for their immigration file, this is the news we have been waiting for. Kareem called me before my operation this morning and told me. I have the confirming email. Praise the LORD! He is RISEN! Again Kareem said to me he has Big Hope! Thank you to everyone who has been praying, we need to continue to pray as Howard says that God may grease the wheels of government. *God Bless and much love Pastor John*

GREETERS: A sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin board and we would ask that anyone who is interested in assisting for the coming year to please sign up. It is a wonderful opportunity to get to know everyone in the congregation.

SEMINARY GUILD MEMBERSHIPS: "April is the time to renew your membership to or join the Seminary Guild for the first time. The Guild provides much-needed support to seminarians and their families especially through the pantry. If you would like to become a member, please see Gail Julie. Fees this year are \$10.00.

GOSPEL TUNES SERVICE OF THE WORD

THE 2ND SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 16, 2023 + 10 AM Worship

GOD WELCOMES US

BEGINNING SONG: "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice"



1 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joice and sing! Now is the tri - umph
2 The Lord of life is ris'n this day; Bring flow'rs of song to
3 Praise we in songs of vic - to - ry That love, that life which
4 Your name we bless, O ris - en Lord, And sing to - day with



of our King! To all the world glad news we bring:
strew His way; Let all the world re - joice and say:
can - not die, And sing with hearts up - lift - ed high:
one ac - cord The life laid down, the life re - stored:



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

Text: © 1958, renewed 1986 Hymns Ancient and Modern Ltd., admin. Hope Publishing Co. Used by permission: LSB Hymn License no. 110005782
Tune: Public domain

<https://www.gracelutheranracine.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/475-Good-Christian-Friends-Rejoice-and-Sing.pdf>

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS:

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Our God expresses graciously in His Word: whoever hides their sins will not do well;

But all who confess and turn away from them will experience mercy. [Prov. 28:13]

[Brief silence for prayerful reflection]

God of grace, love and communion:

We confess that we have failed to love You with our whole heart, soul and mind, and to love our neighbours as ourselves. We ignore Your commandments, stray from Your ways, and follow other 'gods', whom we have believed will give us happiness. Have mercy on us. Forgive our sins and raise us up to new life, to a wise and good and true life full of Your grace, that we may serve You faithfully and give honour to Your holy Name. Amen.

In the mercy of Almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for You and for His sake, forgives you all of your sins. To all who believe in Christ, He comes to live in them, so that all may have life in His name. So in the place of Christ and by His Holy Word, I forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

SUNG KYRIE

"To The Lord We Pray"

(Tune: "Just a closer walk with Thee")



1. To the Lord we pray for peace, for the peace sent from a-bove,
 2. Lord, have mer-cy up-on us; Christ, have mer-cy up-on us,



For the hope of this our world, for the church, please bless with Your love:
 Lord, have mer-cy up-on us, give us peace, O Lord, give us peace.

HYMN OF PRAISE

"Praise To The Lamb"

Revelations 5 & 19



Heav'nly hosts in wor-ship sing, Ho -- ly,-- Ho - ly, cry; He the First and



He the Last, God the Lord Most High. Glo-ry, hon-our, pow'r and praise



be to Him al-one! We, with all cre-ation fall, be-fore His throne.



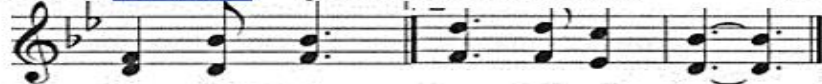
Praise to the Lamb, praise to the Lamb; By His great



off-er-ing, we are set free!



Praise to the Lamb, praise to the Lamb; Now and for-



ev - er - more! --- Praise to the Lamb!

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

We pray: Loving God, Heavenly Father, Your Son Jesus Christ is the Resurrection and the Life, Who gives hope and joy to those who struggle with doubt. Give to all of us who do not see Him, faith and life and blessing, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

GOD SPEAKS TO US

The New Testament Reading: Acts of the Apostles 2: 14, 22-32

[So] Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Fellow Jews and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.... Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having released him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him, ‘I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; therefore, my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover, my flesh will live in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades or let your Holy One experience corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’ “Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, ‘He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.’ “This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The Epistle: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him, and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL VERSE: “Just A Closer Walk”



1. I am weak but Thou art strong; Je - sus, keep me from all wrong;



I'll be sat - is - fied as long As I walk, let me walk close to Thee.

Dai - ly walk - ing close to Thee, Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.

The Holy Gospel: *St. John 20: 19-31*

The Holy Gospel, according to St. John, the 20th chapter:

Glory to You, O Lord.

When 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.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.' But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So 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.' A 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.' Then 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.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.' Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But 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. This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to You, O Christ.**

THE APOSTLES' CREED:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, from thence he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life + everlasting. Amen.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

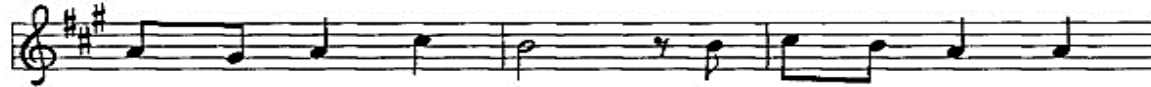
GOSPEL SONG:

“We Walk By Faith”

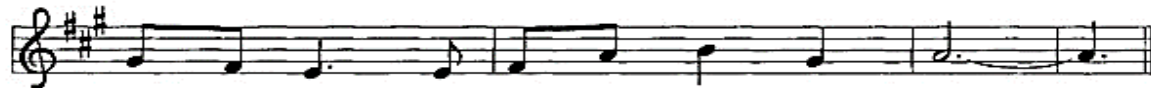
www.hymnary.org/hymn/ELW2006/page/884



1 We walk by faith and not by sight; with
 2 We may not touch your hands and side, nor
 3 Help then, O Lord, our un - be - lief; and
 4 For you, O res - ur - rec - ted Lord, are
 5 And when our life of faith is done, in



gra - cious words draw near, O Christ, who spoke as
 fol - low where you trod; but in your prom - ise
 may our faith a - bound to call on you when
 found in means di - vine: be - neath the wa - ter
 realms of clear - er light may we be - hold you



none e'er spoke: "My peace be with you here."
 we re - joice, and cry, "My Lord and God!"
 you are near and seek where you are found:
 and the word, be - neath the bread and wine.
 as you are, with full and end - less sight.

Text: Henry Alford, 1810–1871, alt.
 Music: Marty Haugen, b. 1950
 Music © 1984 GIA Publications, Inc.

SHANTI
 CM

MESSAGE

GOD RECEIVES OUR GIFTS & HEARS OUR PRAYERS

OFFERING SONG:

“Create In Me”

(Tune: Sweet Hour Of Prayer)



Cre -- ate in me, cre - ate in me, a clean heart Lord, cre-



-ate in me; re -- new a spir -- it right in me, cre



-ate in me, cre -- ate in me. Your pres - ence ne'er de



-part from me, Your Spir - it ne'er re—move from me, re-



store to me Your joy so free! Cre -- ate in me, cre - ate in me.

THE OFFERINGS are gathered.

PRAYERS

Lord God, Heavenly Father, we thank and praise you for the glorious resurrection of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Your Son, our Passover Lamb, for He has taken away the sin of the world. Forgive us and all people.

Praying for mercy; **Hear us, O God, Alleluia!**

Your Son said, 'Peace be with you'. Bring your peace to the world, to warring nations, to places of cruel persecution, and within our own country.

Praying for mercy; **Hear us, O God, Alleluia!**

Your Son met the women and asked them to tell the disciples about his resurrection. Guide Christians everywhere to witness to the resurrection in their lives.

Praying for mercy; **Hear us, O God, Alleluia!**

Your Son strengthened the faith of Thomas by telling him to touch his hands and side. Reassure those who are troubled by doubts, and strengthen their faith in your goodness.

Praying for mercy; **Hear us, O God, Alleluia!**

Your Son conquered death by his death and won the victory by his resurrection. Be the consolation for those in need of health, strength and restoration, remembering before you..... Be with those who are dying, and lead them to life with you forever.

Praying for mercy; **Hear us, O God, Alleluia!**

Heavenly Father, help all who now celebrate these joyful holy days here on earth to finally praise you forever, with all the angels and saints in heaven. We ask this through your risen Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

CLOSING EASTER PRAYER:

O Lord Jesus Christ the Son of the living God, set Your cross and empty grave in our hearts and minds, now, and in the hour of our death and promise to safely give us grace and mercy: that we may have forgiveness and holy pardon, and for Your Church, instill peace and unity, and unto all redeemed children life and glory everlasting, Who lives and rules as one God, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

GREETING & BLESSING:

Let us praise the Lord: **Thanks be to God.**

The blessing of Almighty God, the Father, Son + and Holy Spirit, be with you now and always. **Amen.**

CLOSING SONG: "The Risen Christ" [www. Hymnary.org](http://www.Hymnary.org)ELW



1 The ris - en Christ, who walks on wound-ed feet
2 The ris - en Christ, who stands with wound-ed side,
3 The ris - en Christ, who breaks with wound-ed hand
4 May we, Christ's bod - y, walk and serve and stand



from gar - den tomb through dark-ened cit - y street,
breathes out his Spir - it on them to a - bide
the bread for those who fail to un - der - stand,
with those op - pressed in this and ev - 'ry land,



un - locks the door of grief, de - spair, and fear,
whose faith still wa - vers, who dare not be - lieve;
re - veals him - self, de - spite their lin - g'ring tears,
till all are blessed and can a bless - ing be,



and speaks a word of peace to all who hear.
new grace, new strength, new pur - pose they re - ceive.
en - flames their hearts, then quick - ly dis - ap - pears.
re - stored in Christ to true hu - man - i - ty.

Text: Nigel Weaver, b. 1952
Music: Walter Greatorex, 1877-1949
Text © 1993 Nigel Weaver
Music © Oxford University Press

WOODLANDS
10 10 10 10

REV. TODD HOEFFS

EASTER 2

Scripture: John 20:19-31

Read My Hands

April 16, 2023

Every year as a kid, the same routine happened for the family vacation.

Up at 4 AM [crack of dawn] The car trunk and space between my sister and I packed to the hilt. Triple A [CAA] maps by the thermos of coffee.

We are road trip ready. Where's mom? Running around the house – checking and re-checking the locked doors leaving the house! Just in case – for fear one isn't locked properly!

Dad would say something – he shouldn't have – They argued the 1st 2 miles.

Over checking locked doors too much! Jesus' disciples in the Gospel really have locked doors. Sitting like prisoners. Jesus' tomb is empty, but their upper room is crowded.

The stone has been rolled back from the grave, but the doors of the disciples' lives are closed and locked. They're afraid of what's on the other side of those doors. The real locked door though is the one closing the house of the heart. The house of imagination and creativity and faithful recollection. The heart of trust is shut tight. We often think the opposite of faith is doubt, but it's not. It's certainty. Because certainty is linked to guarantee, what can be measured, seen, secured. That is always about controlling the trajectory of our life, which is based in fear. The disciples are certain Jesus is dead. They are afraid those who crucified Him will do the same to them. Their certainty is wrapped up in fear, The women visited them with Good News from an angel. They preached the Gospel. And yet their word means nothing. It's just a word, not a physical experience. If He's alive, where is He?

But then He comes. [iPhone] On Easter evening. Jesus brings them peace after passing through locked doors. Nothing can keep Jesus away. Peace coming from His Word and His wounds. This is what makes Christianity so remarkable. Jesus doesn't remove us out of our humanity; Jesus doesn't cover up the cost of rescuing us; Nail holes and spear stab marks don't vanish. Jesus IS humanity, Jesus IS new life, Everything He experiences in death He displays in life. And that life He pours into us so in our death we pass over into Heaven.

Jesus' wounds show God's love and compassion for each one of us.

Those wounds show God's identification with and empathy for every one of us.

Those wounds show God's intense thirst for justice, peace, forgiveness, acceptance, and mercy . . . because His wounds are our wounds! By His wounds we are healed.

By our wounds we help others heal. But Thomas doesn't see these healing wounds.

He only hears about it. Thomas wants to see the Jesus he's been following all these years.

He has to see Him and touch Him to know it's real. He's labeled doubting Thomas, but

Scripture doesn't really have words for doubt. Hebrew and Greek/Roman people viewed it as having faith or being against faith. Not in an atheist kind of way but needing certainties.

That's the heart of the problem. Needing certainty. As imperfect humans, we are both filled with faith and against faith. We find it easy to believe and difficult to believe.

Often people can be driven to be atheistic because they get stuck in the trauma. If we expect God to be a superhero coming to our aid whisking us to instant safety, Then we will be very, very disillusioned with our life and God will be the enemy. But if we expect God to keep His promises, to be with us and living in us, To keep us in peace amid life's tornadoes and trials, Then we will be grateful, humble, forgiving people. As long as we remain behind the locked doors of our houses nothing changes. We all have doubts. That's fear. And the more we worry about our doubts the worse it becomes. Certainty works against faith. Christians have long been pre-occupied with certainty. We identify our *faith in God* with our *thoughts about God*, and so, of course, we always think correctly. Certainty becomes harmful as without too much concern we start turning away from God's relationship of trust and instead grab onto certainty.

We'd rather have a fleeting guarantee than a long-haul life of trust. We see guarantees like money in the bank, [safe but not] And we see faith as a cross your fingers hope that never happens...It's not. Hope is the assurance of things NOT SEEN.

Because it's centred in GOD not us. Only He could be what we couldn't be.

Faithful

Trusting

Willing

Welcoming

Loving

Sacrificial

Dying AND rising!

Because of Easter, all of this is part of who we become.

We are brought into a relationship by grace to trust in *God*—to have a faith “not so much defined by *what* we believe but in *whom* we trust.” Being a follower of Christ isn't about the content of our thinking, But the integrity of our loyal trusting in HIM. Faith isn't about having all the right answers. Faith is about willing to ask questions, willing to wonder why God takes so long to help sometimes. Willing to cast every care onto Him because He cares so deeply.

Easter is Jesus inviting, asking, calling, insisting, and accompanying us into more life and more peace and more dependence on Him. The impossible is possible. The never before imagined doesn't sound so strange. Easter is Jesus' promise that there's a future on the other side of our locked doors. He wastes no time in trying to unlock them, He just passes right on through. As He passes through our water, making it a Baptismal shower of renewal;

He passes through the Scriptures, the hymns, the prayers, even rests in the bread and wine making our communion meal a physical feeding to enrich the times we struggle with faith and trust. We may not get to run our hands over Jesus' wounds like Thomas, But because He was given that gift, The gift we have of His Flesh and Blood, wounds and all, in our lives is

priceless. Blessed are we. We believe and do not see Other than the face of our Lord among the least and lost and needy around us In all ages, stages and walks of life.

Faith is nurtured, deepened and strengthened, in the suffering, risks and uncertainties of this world – other people's suffering as well as our own, that we draw closest to our risen Lord; in the deprivations of the poor and the hungry; in the powerlessness of the oppressed; in the crippling debts that economically enslave many, in the desperation of the refugee seeking political asylum; in the sorrow of the sinner, the degradation of the prisoner, the fear of the hospital patient, the tears in a broken relationship. We are given comfort by the wounded hands and side of Jesus – And in the end, the strength of our faith, the depth of our belief, will not be measured by our ability to explain perfectly what we believe but how we show what we believe in serving Christ when we serve all who call for help. Faith is evidenced in our responses to daily life in Jesus – whether we walk away from sharing the faith, whether we just let faith be ours and no one else's--or whether, in the face of it all, we proclaim by our worship and our lives, 'My Lord and my God!' And by grace in faith, filled with trust, not knowing where we going But only that His presence is leading and healing, we must reach out and help soothe the wounds of others and see in them

My Lord and my God!

Amen.