

# **“With Great Power: Dancing Together”**

## **Second Sunday of Easter – April 11, 2021**

### **Welcome/Announcements**

Good morning everyone and welcome to the worship of God on this second Sunday of Easter. The Easter season is here! An entire season of proclaiming that life and love are more powerful than death and hatred. We get to celebrate the hope and passion of Easter for a few more weeks... right up to Pentecost near the end of May.

I love that Easter coincides with spring... hope and new life are all around. What a blessing!

And it is also a blessing to have you join us for worship today. We hope that you will feel welcome here among us and find something to feed your spirit during this time together.

Our desire to be a welcoming church is so important. I suspect there are many in our city who desperately need to feel welcomed and loved. If you know one of these people, invite them to join us one Sunday. Share the link and tell others of our commitment to live out our identity as an Affirming Ministry – welcoming all God’s children – no matter their age, class, race, ability, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation.. God’s love and our love are for everyone.

Its from a place of love and respect that we share our gratitude to the First Nations and Metis ancestors for their hospitality which allows us to live, work and serve God here on Treaty 6 Territory and Homeland of the Metis Nation.

I don’t really have much in the way of announcements today.

I will mention that we have an Annual General Meeting coming up on May . We will let you know more details closer to the date but we do know it will be on Zoom. Annual reports will be made available to you as soon as they are ready.

Otherwise we are continuing with our regular programs... Sunday morning children’s program and youth program... we have split the youth into 2 groups now so grades 6-8 will meet at 10 and grades 9-12 will meet at 11. The young adult discussion group continues every Wednesday night at 6:30pm and is for all adults 18-35ish.

We also have the Bible Study each Wednesday at 1pm and our Friday at 10am coffee time... both on Zoom. Our email book club will be starting a new book on April 15 if anyone wishes to join please let me know. And I am considering the possibility of starting a small group discussion for 6 weeks beginning mid April. I haven’t yet picked a topic so am open to your ideas. This discussion group will be on Zoom. If you are interested, please contact me and if you have a suggestion for a discussion topic or theme, please let me know.

And that is all I have for today... so let's turn our hearts to song. Today we are introducing a new song which will be our theme song for the Easter season.

## **Theme Song: Dare to Dance vs 1**

### **Opening Worship**

I light this candle now as a reminder of the light of Christ... a light that continues to shine brightly – showing us the way.

I know many of us are entering into this season of hope and passion with some mixed emotions as we dare to hope that as spring arrives, the weather warms, the grass greens... and as we move closer to the end of this pandemic ... as we dare to hope we also hold in our hearts the heaviness and uncertainty of this last year.

The Easter story we heard last week tells us that bad news seemed to have surrounded the disciples as they watched their Beloved Teacher succumb to death on a cross. We've had our share of bad news as well. As Easter people, we know the rest of the story. A story that asks us to dare to hope. A story that calls us to dance... dances of freedom for the world to see – even and probably especially in times of difficulty.

Dancing requires that we pay attention to our dance partners. It requires finding a rhythm together. The Sunday after Easter brings the story of Jesus appearing to the disciples and breathing the Holy Spirit on them. Other scriptures this week point to the power of being together, of finding fellowship in the presence of Jesus and the presence of the community. What does it take to dance together?

Over the next several weeks, we dare to dance again! Dances of hope, dances of justice, dances of love.

Let us pray...

Holy One, Justice-Seeker, Lover of Creation –  
You are the restorer of life, the conqueror of all that is death-dealing  
in our hearts and in this world.

Tune us to each other.

Come and dance with us, engage with us, as we seek you –  
so that we can be risen with Christ and in Christ.

Be with us now, we pray. Amen.

**Song:**

**Scripture**

**First Reading: John 20:19-22** (NRSV, adapted)

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 him. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As God has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

**Second Reading: 1 John 1: 1-4** (NRSV, adapted)

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the very Creator of the universe and was revealed to us – we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with both the Creator and with Jesus the Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

**Sermon**

In the introduction to worship today, I asked the question... what does it take to dance together?

Might seem like a strange thing to ask in the middle of a pandemic... together? what's that?

Well... we have, for over a year now been worshipping together... in our own space, at our own time... but still – together. I don't know about you all, but I certainly can feel your presence each time I prepare for worship. When I'm recording the service I can see Ernie and Phyllis sitting there to my right... I see Don & Leslie over there by the piano... I see the group of women sitting along the back wall pretending to be there for worship when they are actually there to make faces at the babies. I see the row of walkers along the wall. I hear the occasionally hearing aid whistle. And I see the youth barely visible behind the bar in the balcony.

I see you in my mind and I feel you in my heart.

And I feel God's presence... reminding me how much we need each other.

Even when we can't dance together... well, even if we can't dance at all – we still need to find a rhythm together.

Throughout the next few weeks when I speak of dance – I'd like you to think of dance in a broad sense.

Think of dance as not only movement of the body... but of the mind, heart and spirit as well.

I don't want to hear anyone say "but I can't dance" or "I hate dancing".

It might be true... but it doesn't matter.

To create the rhythm that we need in order to dance together we only need hope... or a desire for hope.. and for justice... and for love.

And rhythm is all we need in order to dance together.

Each of us has our own “groove.”

What’s yours?

Head-bopping?

Hip swinging?

Is it a waltz?

a polka?

Or do you just like to free flow across the dance floor?

(pause)

The Easter season is a time of “coming out of the tombs.”

In a year like we’ve had, the tombs of death, economic loss, grief and unrest are obvious.

Yet some tombs we need to emerge from are of our own making...

what holds us back from claiming our freedom to really LIVE and to dance our dances fully?”

No matter what confines us, the Easter message is one that offers the courage for new starts...

The courage to find the rhythm that works for us...

The courage to dance.

So let’s take a little look at the gospel reading today.

In this reading, John makes it clear that after the crucifixion of Jesus, the disciples were overcome by fear and despair... I think that’s a fair response to witnessing the torture and death of their leader. Not only that but they were in quite a religious and political pickle. For 3 years they had followed Jesus and participated in his ministry of teaching and healing... but it was also a ministry of challenging the Roman empire and the religious leaders – which didn’t exactly make them a popular bunch with some very powerful people. The disciples felt like this dance they had been in for so long and for which they had risked so much.. was over... they could no longer feel their rhythm.

And then, while they were hiding away, Jesus came to them... bringing peace... and he breathed on them the Holy Spirit... and their rhythm had returned. Jesus was preparing them to dance again... to dance hope, justice, and love.

Jesus knew that they needed him – just as he needed them – to dance these into the world.

Similarly... the reading from 1 John are words of encouragement... “we are telling you what we have seen and heard so that you may be in fellowship with us and with God because then.. our joy will be complete.”

Sure they can do this dance on their own... but they know that is not what God intended... their joy is not yet complete.

We can dance alone... and I think even we probably should dance along sometimes – just you and God – moving together, finding a rhythm – but we were created to dance in community.

And its our own individual rhythms that keep the dance interesting.

Now we can't all go off grooving to our own beat in our own way together... where the louder, more powerful beats are the only ones heard and get all the attention... we need to make space to hear every individual beat... maybe some we aren't fond of – others might get us dancing or sitting – gently swaying... but all of them are important pieces of the rhythm.

Over this past year we have had to find new ways to dance together – but the dancing has never stopped.

As long as your lungs fill with the Spirit of hope... your hands move with the Christ of justice and your heart beats with the God of love.... you have the rhythm you need to dance.

I want to share with you the video of a group of children from Uganda dancing... a dance that holds within it so much hope. The song you will hear is called *Jerusalema* and is written and sung in Isulu by Master KG and NomaDumbezi (Nomcebo Zikode) from South Africa. This upbeat song is a lamentation for a better time and place. The words translate to: Jerusalem my home, keep me, walk with me, don't leave me here, my place is not here, my kingdom is not here.

*Jerusalema* is actually adapted from an old gospel hymn, titled [Jerusalem Ikhaya Lami](#) (Jerusalem My Home). The original hymn celebrates the promise of the New Jerusalem in Revelation where John saw, "A new heaven and a new earth". John's vision looks forward to the day when God will once again dwell among God's people. The original hymn reflects on this promise and hope. And describes a wondrous place of rest and salvation, where there is no pain or sin. There are no more tears. It is a vision of hope, of justice, of love.

And so is the *Jerusalema* dance craze.

This global trend began with a group of young men in Angola who, over lunch, while holding plates of food, start to demonstrate the dance routine to some friends who then join in. This video was followed by another from Portugal and then soon clips of dancers from across the globe including nuns, construction workers, police officers, waiters and gas station attendants and army personnel began to appear.

There are also emotional videos of healthcare workers from right across the world dancing hope for patients fighting Covid-19.

South African president Cyril Ramaphosa urged his citizens to take part in the dance challenge. On South Africa's Heritage Day he said "[dance to] reflect on the difficult journey

we have all travelled, to remember those who have lost their lives, and to quietly rejoice in the remarkable and diverse heritage of our nation”

Here’s the video....

How many of you were tapping your toes?

So over the next few weeks, during this Easter season, I will be sharing some of these videos on our Facebook page and during worship to inspire all of us to dance for hope, dance for justice and dance for love.

And... this is the best part... I will also be sharing a tutorial so we can all learn this dance too. Its not very complicated and you can definitely adapt it to do with your canes or walkers or wheelchairs. Children can dance it too... if you are old enough or young enough to smile... you can do this dance.

Now listen... there are four congregations sharing this theme for the season of Easter. ST. Martin’s United, Delisle-Vanscoy United and Calvary United in Prince Albert. The ministers in each of those congregations have indicated that their members have the most enthusiasm for dancing. And, while I know the purpose of this dance is bringing people together – which it will – I also think a little bit of healthy competition can go a long way to motivating us to seek hope, justice and love – for ourselves and our communities. So I spoke quite a bit about what an amazing group of folks you are and how you all love to get down and dance – soooo... I encourage you to find the video. It is on our Facebook page and you can also find it yourself by googling “jerusalema dance tutorial”. And have fun. Once you feel confident or by May 16, whichever comes first, you will be invited to video yourself (or have someone do it for you) doing the dance and we, along with the other congregations, will be putting them all together for one spectacular dance party on the day of Pentecost – May 18. Depending on what happens with the pandemic, we may be able to do a parking lot dance at some point in May. But pandemic or not... we will dance!

Just before I close here today, I want to just mention that as an extension of this worship, I continue to share Theme Conversations in a separate video, also posted to YouTube and on Facebook each week. For the Easter season, each week I will introduce the young... and the young at heart... to the story of a dreamer – a public figure – someone who brought their unique “dance” to the world... doing what they could to make the world a better place. So if this is something that interests you, please look for it and maybe share it with any young folks who may be in your life.

### **Prayers of the People**

God of Resurrection,

We come into your presence now hoping in some way to touch you, to see for ourselves the truth of your resurrection. Gather up our lingering fears and confusing, meet our doubts with compassion and understanding.

Open our eyes to your love and grace surrounding us.

Open our ears to hear you calling us to new challenges.

Open our hearts to the dancing movement of your spirit.  
Help us to experience you standing in our midst, offering peace... offering hope.  
And may we receive all that you offer, in gratitude.

And it is with gratitude that we take a moment now in silence to give thanks for all of the blessings you have shared with us... in gratitude we pray: (silence)

And now, hearts touching gratitude, we are ready to offer our prayers of care and concern for the world... for our friends, families and for ourselves.

We hold before you, O God, those who are in need of our love, our kindness, and our compassion... those in need of our prayers:  
the ones who are struggling right now – with worry, fear, sadness, loneliness, anger  
the ones who are living with health concerns...  
the ones who are grieving...  
the ones who are addicted...  
the ones facing loss and change and uncertainty...  
and we pray for the ones who care for them – for the support workers, family members and friends...  
We pray for all the painful places of injustice in our world and in our communities...  
For the ones who live with trauma... the trauma that comes from discrimination, rejection, violent words and actions...  
For the ones struggling with their commitment to be good allies, friends and neighbours...  
We pray God for all the places of brokenness in your world...  
We pray for your healing love and light to reach into those places, offering even a moment.. even a glimmer of hope to those who most need it.

And knowing that we all have our own places and people where brokenness exists, we take another moment now in quiet to hold our brokenness before God – opening even further to the love that is within and all around us. (silence)

O God, hear our prayers, receive our hearts and from your deep love may we find the healing and hope we need... today and every day.  
And may the dance of your Spirit call us to be in partnership with you, moving together as we seek to dance your hope, justice and love in all that we do.  
And now we sing together the prayer that Jesus taught... Our Father

### **Benediction**

I don't know who among you might be country music fans....  
But given our theme of dance, I need to share with you these words from Lee Anne Womack's song "I hope you dance" as we wrap up our time together.

"I hope you never lose your sense of wonder,  
You get your fill to eat but always keep that hunger,  
May you never take one single breath for granted,  
God forbid love ever leave you empty handed.

I hope you still feel small when you stand beside the ocean,  
Whenever one door closes I hope one more opens,  
Promise me that you'll give faith a fighting chance,  
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance...  
I hope you dance!"

And may the Loving God,  
Risen Christ,  
and Dancing Spirit  
fill you with all you need  
for the days ahead.

**Theme Song:** Dare to Dance vs 2