

Watch this week's service on YouTube by clicking here: [Worship for May 3/20 \(video\)](#)

An audio file of this week's reflection is on the church website:

<https://charleswoodunited.org/media/sermons/>

Church School – Rosalie Finch and Laura Rousseau are holding weekly live Cool School on Zoom each Sunday at 10:00 am. If you would like to join or are not receiving our children and youth emails please contact Laura at lrousseau@charleswood.org to be added.

Dear Friends

It is a very happy coincidence where we live that the season of Easter and the season of Spring happen at the same time. It is almost too easy to sing and pray and teach about New Life when literally everything all around us is coming to life after a long season of hibernation. Creation is a constant reminder of the power of life over death.

As we enter May and the third month of concern over the Covid-19 pandemic, we are beginning to hear about re-opening that which has been closed, re-starting that which has been stopped, and re-emerging from the practice of staying in. As we do so, we are filled with hope and gratitude for the opportunity we have been given to reflect upon the things we have learned that we wish to carry forward. We are asking ourselves what it is we want to retain as we move into what has been called a 'new normal'. We will be cautious but it will be a hopeful caution. It is possible to be grateful for both what has been and what will be.

Prelude

Listen to a beautiful duet by Richard and Kathryn Ball: [Abiding Love](#)

Bible Reading

The Gospel Lesson for May 3 is Acts 2:42-47: You can read it by clicking here: [Acts 2:42-47](#)

Hymn

Members of the congregation singing the traditional hymn Love Divine, All Loves Excelling: [Love Divine, All Loves Excelling](#)

Reflection

Last weekend there was a special event on TV. It was a house concert of Canadian recording artists called Stronger Together or Tous Ensemble. By the magic of television their living rooms were brought into our living rooms. I learned a great deal watching this concert. Not the least of which is that there are a tremendous number of wonderfully talented artists living and working in Quebec who I have never heard of. Another lesson was that I am much more familiar with middle aged and older rockers than I am with the new generation of Canadian performers.

“Stronger together” seems to be the theme that has emerged during this period of time we are taking care of one another in a pandemic caused by Covid-19. Being together is something that we have learned and the value of this is something I hope we will carry forward when the pandemic is over. I also want to suggest that as we learn about togetherness in a deeper and more meaningful way, we find that togetherness is in fact a spiritual value.

People who know me will be familiar with the name Richard Rohr. Rohr is the American Franciscan writer and one of his prominent themes is the idea that we can move into a deeper and more meaningful life by recognizing ego and soul within ourselves. Ego and soul are two parts of us all and they are both important. But we have to be intentional and desire to move from a life where ego dominates into a life where soul dominates. Rohr says that ego is the part of us that asks questions like ‘How am I special?’, ‘How am I different?’, ‘How am I unique in all the universe?’. On the other hand, soul is the part of us that asks ‘How am I the same?’ ‘What do I have in common?’ ‘What do I have to share?’.

Sometimes Rohr refers to this as the two halves of life. But for us to move from ego into soul something has to happen, something painful, something has to die to make room for soul. No matter how you describe what we are living through I think it is fair to say that this is undeniably a ‘soul-full’ time. We are learning that we are stronger together. We are all vulnerable. We are all exposed. We are all moving through this as one. And in our common connections to one another we are discovering something important about our spirit and about life.

It is necessary to come to this revelation in order to bring about the transformation we all know is necessary and desired. One where all people are celebrated and accepted and welcomed. Not only in our community but across this country and around the world.

The reading for this Sunday comes from the second chapter of Acts. Acts is the story of the early church and so when I point out that this lesson is from chapter 2, I am asking you to realize that that is an *early* story in the life of the *early* church. If you listen to some of the phrases used to describe the early church in Acts 2:42-47, you will hear a certain energy, an enthusiasm, and a momentum. Let me repeat some of the phrases in this brief passage. It says they met *constantly*. It says they shared a *common life*. That *awe* was felt by *everyone*. It describes *many signs*. That they held *everything in common*. That they shared meals with *unaffected joy*. That they enjoyed the favour of the *whole people*. Can you hear in this description of the early church echoes of togetherness? And the realization that we are indeed, stronger together? Stronger together than we are living apart and separately. Stronger together so that more things are possible. Stronger together so that more people are included. Stronger together so that there is a future for one and for all.

We have an opportunity in this time of slowing down, in this space of reflection, in the time in between what was normal and what will become a new normal, to embrace what the Spirit is telling us. Indeed what the Spirit is showing us. For the Spirit is teaching us about the unconditional love of God and how that unconditional love can be extended to one another. We are stronger together. Amen.

Song

Our good friend Keith McPherson joins Carla and Brendan for a familiar song. Listen here: [Stand By Me](#)

Prayers

God of this New Day, the earth awakens and we rejoice at the signs of new life all around us. In the budding of the trees and the greening of the lawn, in the calls of returning geese, and the sight of emerging crocus, we sense your providence and feel your presence. We thank you for the new life we find in the community of faith, for the call to neighbourliness and the lifting of spirits, for the art and music that reflect your creative power.

God of all creation, filling the world with love and hope and peace, we thank you for the wondrous tapestry we find in the human condition. We celebrate the myriad of language and colour and culture and custom in which your people live their days. Help us recognize the goodness in all things and all people.

God of Healing Power, we pray for wholeness and well-being in the world that you so love. We continue to pray for our sisters and brothers who have fallen ill during the Covid-19 pandemic. We pray for their return to health. We pray for everyone who is working in healthcare, hospital, and care homes. We pray for their safety and security with thanksgiving for the vital service they are providing and the inspiration they are offering.

God who calls us into community, we pray for our neighbours who have continued to work in services required for our well-being. There are displays of courage being shown daily which have rewarded us all and for that we give thanks.

God who comforts the broken-hearted, we continue to hold in prayer our sisters and brothers in Nova Scotia. As long as the sorrow through which they are living remains, we will remember them. We pray for people in our community who have had to grieve the loss of loved ones without the immediate comfort of those around them. We pray for the members of our Armed Forces who died in the helicopter accident off of Greece this week, for comfort for their friends and families. Let your Spirit continue to sustain your people through this indefinite and difficult time.

We turn to you, Holy One, for we recognize that your presence is ever near and that, in this moment, you have drawn as close as ever. Let us be moved by grace, mercy, and hope as we meet each new day. In the name of Jesus Christ who leads us to pray together when we say...OUR FATHER...

Be well, safe, and hopeful.

Michael