

Dear Friends

Happy Easter!

One of the things I discovered and inherited when coming to Charleswood United Church was that this congregation always did its own thing on Good Friday. In the churches I grew up in, and the early ones I served, it was typical for Good Friday to be a shared experience, either with a neighbouring United Church or with a congregation of another denomination. (I used to tease my late father about the time when I was a teenager and I was sure he had fallen asleep while listening to his colleague preach at a Good Friday service. He insisted he was listening with his eyes closed!)

It is easy to say that there is merit in observing Good Friday with your neighbours. Good Friday is a uniquely global Christian observance. No one can ever claim to possess something so haunting and humbling. But the truth is that in a lot of places Good Friday services are shared because churches worry that not enough people will attend to warrant the effort to observe Good Friday on their own.

That has never been the case at Charleswood. This church has always maintained a commitment, in congregation, choir, and staff to uphold the dignity and integrity of Good Friday as a solemn yet essential part of our life together. It has an importance that we seem to recognize and I have always valued this congregation's honouring of that value.

Not only does Good Friday set the stage for the celebration of Easter (how much brighter seems the light when emerging from the dark?) but the central message of Good Friday is one we ought to hear together, as a community who attempts to live out this story all year round. Coming together on Good Friday is a way of demonstrating that whenever we are confronted by death and sorrow the one thing we can do in opposition to that power is to gather together. Or in other words, when we meet one another as companions in the face of death, there is life.

Being together matters. Recently I was thinking about hymn singing. It is one of the things I miss the most about online worship. I know that we have excellent musicians and words on the screen that provide the opportunity to sing as we worship. But the truth is I seldom sing out loud as I am watching. I like singing in church. I even dare say that I like singing out loud in church. But part of the reason I like it so much is that my voice gets lost in the sound of all the other voices singing at the same time. In fact, the louder all of you are, the louder I can sing.

Easter is the song we sing together. He is Risen! Hallelujah! Because we share the up and downs, the highs, and lows, the death and life, our voices join together in a song of triumph. May the blessings of Love's victory be yours to sing.

Grace and peace,

Michael

P.S. Our **Good Friday service** will be posted on YouTube on Thursday, April 1 and a link to the service will be sent to you by email. Our deepest gratitude to all who worked to prepare this service and a special thank you Simon Proulx, guest clarinet on one of the anthems.

Our **Easter service** will be posted on YouTube on Thursday, April 1 and a link will be sent to you by email. Thank you to Derek Fraser from Oak Park High School who joins us on the trumpet. Look for a very special effort on the part of many at the end of the service...