



THE SPIRIT OF ST. MARK'S

Parish Newsletter

April 3, 2022

An Easter Message from the Rector

Easter is our biggest Christian celebration. But the truth is we have all had a hard time celebrating the last couple of years.

From the beginning of the global pandemic in March 2020, big changes have happened to our world. The patterns and expectations we had in our lives in 2019 were disrupted and altered as every corner of the world felt the terrible pains of a deadly pandemic. The impact has sent ripples across our lives.

This will be our third Easter since our world was turned on its ear by COVID-19 and we are still picking up the pieces of what we have lost and trying to determine how we move forward with the pieces and parts that we have left.

In the Gospel of Luke's account of the resurrection, the followers of Jesus, the disciples and the women, in their grief and shock were wondering what was next. "How did we get here, from the triumphal arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem to Jesus being dead, and everything seeming in tatters? What do we do and where do we go next?" It was the third day after Jesus' death on the cross and his followers emerged from their hiding places of grief and sorrow to visit Jesus' tomb.

Feeling helpless to do anything else, they have come to anoint his dead body in spices. And to add darkness on top of the darkness, even that plan is foiled because Jesus' body is gone and the tomb is empty.

Like Jesus' followers that day, we too wonder with complete uncertainty out of the life changing events of the pandemic, "What will happen next?"

It is here in Luke's Gospel that God intercedes and sends them a reminder of the Good News. In their grief, God sends them messengers to remind them that God had always had their path forward prepared. The messengers God sent say, *"Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again."* (Luke 24:6-7)

Once the messengers spoke, we are told that *"Then they remembered his words"* (Luke 24:8).

In their grief, they had forgotten what Jesus had promised them. Then God acted, they remembered, and hope filled the hearts that grief had overcome.



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Sometimes we can forget that God loved this world so much that he sent his Son to save us and to invite us to follow the path he promises us that will lead to abundant and everlasting life, in this world, even in its brokenness, and into the next.

I know it is hard to imagine forgetting a promise that is that important, but forgetting, even something as important as that, is a very human thing, especially in a time of great crisis.

Sometimes we need a reminder.

It is my hope that this year's celebration of Easter will bring each of us a needed reminder that God has already prepared our path forward for us.

Good people of St. Mark's, you and I have been through an unimaginable ordeal and our lives have been changed, but God's Good News promised through Christ is the great gift that will help guide our next steps individually and together as a community. Now is the time to renew and reaffirm our trust in God's goals for us and for all creation.

Like those followers who were left grieving and uncertain after the tragic and unjust events of Jesus' crucifixion, we need a reminder that God has a path for us that will lead us through whatever obstacle or suffering our earthly world challenges us with. A promise revealed as true by the words of the messengers in the Easter Gospel, *"He is not here, but has risen."* (Luke 24:5)

All that the world threw at Jesus, even death, could not stop God.

All that the world has thrown at us can not stop us, if we follow where Christ leads.

That's what happens next for us and for St. Mark's.

I wish us all a joyful and life-giving Easter.

Christ is Risen!

Peace,

The Rev'd Rob Park

Holy Week and Easter Services

April 10	Palm Sunday	9:00 & 10:30 am
April 14	Maundy Thursday	7:00 pm
April 15	Good Friday	10:00 am
April 16	Easter Vigil	7:00 pm
April 17	Easter Sunday	9:00 & 10:30 am
April 17	Easter Sunday	12:00 pm

Please note that for the 12:00 pm service, you must be fully vaccinated.

Worship with Us

Card Ministry

by Debbie Belowitz

As always, when I reach out to St. Mark's for volunteers, I receive an abundance of response; I am very grateful. Christine Fournier will coordinate the new Card Ministry team of Elizabeth Stone, Brenda Cochrane, Carole Moffat, Shirley Marsden, Jayne Story, Anne Walker and Janet Vickerman (yes, it took 8 people to replace Sylvia!) in sending cards to our parishioners. We have added the use of electronic cards for appropriate occasions. If you know of anyone who would enjoy receiving a card, please give the information to Christine Fournier.



A Message from Your Wardens

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Romans 12:12

While our year began under yet another cloud of COVID-19 and having to revert to online worship, in recent weeks we have reason to hope. Ash Wednesday was our first in-person gathering and Rev. Rob's first in-person service. We are thrilled to have him as our new Rector and look forward to everyone soon being able to meet him.

As stated in our 2021 Vestry report, we are extremely thankful for the wage support money we received from the federal government through the Diocese of Huron. This kept us from having a significant deficit. As we move forward, our donations continue to be down from last year. It is our prayer that throughout the spring and summer as things return to more 'normal', that we will see our givings also increase.

As you may know, we have had another staff change with the move of Alison Clark to Grace Church. We were saddened to lose Alison after six years. We have some folks doing interim work while we are working to find the best person to fill the position of Music Director.

Despite the pandemic, life continues. We would like to welcome those who are new to our congregation, and we hope to get to know you better soon. We have lost several parishioners, even in the last few months, and we would like to express our condolences to those families.

As the weather warms and spring blooms, remember that our gardens will be filled with flowers and our hearts always open to welcome you. Feel free to contact us at anytime.

We wish you all a Blessed Easter!

Your Wardens

Christine Hazel, Neil Dunning, Cindy Taylor and Sharon Bliss

Senior's Event

The Elders Legacy Project is a community project gathering stories from Brantford and Brant County about moments that are special in your life. The stories can be recorded, written, art, video and pictures that will be put together to share with our community. The team from *Belonging Brant* will be coming to St. Mark's on Wednesday May 4th from 1 pm to 3 pm to talk about the project and gather stories. It will also be a time of fellowship and to connect with those you have not seen in the last two years and hopefully, if allowed, refreshments. Please contact Debbie Belowitz or Christine Fournier if you would like to attend.

Annual Yard Cleanup
Saturday, April 9 at 9:30 am

Bring your
favourite
gardening tools.
All welcome!



Journey to Jerusalem
A Family Activity Afternoon
Sunday, April 10, 2:00 - 4:00



Register online or
at the church
office.

Join us for
A Good Friday All-Ages
Family Walk
Jaycee Park - 395 Dunsdon Street
at 12:00 pm



Blood Pressure Screening
Sunday, May 8
following each service



Masks will be required.

Community Outreach

Food Bank Plus

March 19th was our latest drive-thru food drive. This was the 24th consecutive food drive since the pandemic began! Your continued generosity has been overwhelming. We have provided lots of additional items as well – socks, mitts, baby items, SPCA items, items for migrant workers and this past month we collected cash for the Ukraine. While we will continue the Saturday food drives, please know that you can always drop food off at the church on a Sunday and we will add it to the monthly total.



In 2022, we have so far collected 1030 pounds of food and just over \$900.00 in monetary donations for the Brantford Food Bank. Thank you so much to our St. Mark's parish family and our surrounding community for all your help and support.

Blessing Centre

Last August, the call went out for a group to help cook a meal at the *Brantford Blessing Centre* on Burnley Avenue. The BBC relies on volunteers from many churches throughout the city to cook a hot meal every night of the week. St. Mark's cooked three dinners in the fall and then decided to commit to the third Monday of the month for 2022. On March 21st, we served 172 dinners!

If you are interested in helping out, even for a single time, please contact Christine in the church office. While much of the food is provided by the donations the BBC receives, we also need to buy items that are not in stock. You can support this outreach by making a monetary donation to the church and marking it '*Blessing Centre*'.

Diocese of Amazonia Easter 2022

by Nigel Challen

It is getting cooler down there in the rainy/wet season with a daily temperature of 31c. This winter has been interesting. Bishop Marinez went on a 'mission' and visited all the churches in her Diocese. She couldn't just jump in a car and drive off. Her Diocese is massive, equivalent to traveling from Brantford to Montreal in size. She conducted services both in churches and outdoors and was welcomed wherever she went. Her mode of transport was varied and ranged from a car, bus, plane, river ferry, and canoe. In addition, Bishop Marinez has recently been given by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the order of 'St. Augustine'. This recognizes her work with Indigenous people and caring for creation (the Amazonian Rain Forests). I understand that this is the highest order that can be given by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Most recently we got news out of Rev. Elias and 'Our Lord of Annunciation' in Icoaria, Amazonia. Three years ago, St. Mark's entered into a partnership with 'The Lord of Annunciation' in Brazil. They wanted to set up a programme for youth at risk and set up an after-hours music programme. I am pleased to report that after technical difficulties and the pandemic, a guitar programme was launched in their renovated church in March 2022. It is attended by approximately 14 teenagers, and they are learning to play acoustic guitars.



They are still struggling down there, with several friends and clergy contracting COVID-19 earlier this year. Their churches are gradually reopening with masks and social distancing. They are still conducting morning prayers every day online using Facebook and Youtube. A different clergy presides every day. I would ask that you pray for them as they continue to struggle.