**Pentecost Communion Service**

**Nutana Park Mennonite Church, May 31, 2020**

**Co-Pastors Patrick Preheim and Susanne Guenther Loewen**

**Introduction: (Susanne)**

Good afternoon and welcome to this online gathering of Nutana Park Mennonite Church. You are beloved of God and each other in this community of faith. We gather in gratitude on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. As you can see, Patrick and I are joining you from our beloved church sanctuary. Welcome.

A few reminders before we start. If you would like to be able to see more than one person at a time on your screen, click on the “Gallery View” of your Zoom screen (an icon that looks like a grid). There may be several pages of people to scroll through. We are grateful for the gifts of music offered by the Ens Funk family, and we will be muting everyone else when they play and sing so that we can hear better. For those who wish, we will have a time of sharing and visiting after our worship service, so if you’d like to be part of that, simply stay on this Zoom call.

As we gather for this virtual Communion service, we may be feeling joy or unease or a bit of both. It’s a joy to be able to see each other’s faces and to gather in this way, even with the limits and distance of technology. But Communion may also feel like it’s something we really need to do in person, as a real-life, in-the-flesh gathered community. That really is central to this practice, which stresses unity and our spiritual calling as the gathered Body of Christ, the church.

**Scripture: Luke 24:13-35, NRSV (Patrick) - The Walk to Emmaus**

13Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. 18Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” 19He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. 22Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. 24Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.” 25Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! 26Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” 27Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

28As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. 30When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 32They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” 33That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” 35Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

### Scripture: John 20:19-22 (Susanne) – Jesus Appears to the Disciples

19When 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.” 20After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” 22When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

As these Scripturepassagessuggest,this is not the first time in Christian history that people have celebrated Communion in their homes. On the very first Easter, the Risen Jesus joined two of the disciples for a meal in their home in the village of Emmaus. Jesus took their bread, blessed it, and broke it, and in that moment they recognized that it was Jesus who had been with them the whole time (Luke 24). So we can think of today as another occasion when we, “like the disciples at Emmaus, will host and be hosted by the risen Christ in [our] own home[s].”[[1]](#footnote-1)

 Another occasion in which homes were the setting for Communion was at the beginning of the early Anabaptist tradition in 16th century Europe (the roots of our Mennonite church). Against the hierarchical, top-down understanding of church leadership held by the dominant Catholic church at the time, early Anabaptists took seriously the biblical idea of the priesthood of all believers – the equality of all church members and their different gifts. In gathering at night in secret in ordinary people’s homes to serve Communion to each other, study the Bible together, and even baptize each other as adults, the early Anabaptists began living out a new way of being the church.[[2]](#footnote-2) This was much like the first disciples, who met the risen Jesus behind locked doors, and received the peace of the Spirit (John 20). So our spiritual heritage shows us that we’re in good company as we celebrate Communion together from our homes today.

As we move into a time of Communion, we light the Christ candle – and you may choose to light a candle in your home to likewise represent the presence and Spirit of the Divine, who is among us as we gather in unity and love across the distance. Though we are the scattered Body of Christ, we ask you to gather us in and make your home in us, Spirit of Christ. May your presence with each of us give us peace and make us whole. AMEN [Light Christ Candle]

**Opening Hymn – Taste and See – Sing the Journey #**86

Communion Liturgy[[3]](#footnote-3)

**A Preparation for Communion:**

*Susanne:* In this season of physical and social distancing we are reminded that Jesus comes to us behind locked doors, alongside of our fears, in the midst of our uncertainty. Jesus comes to us, so we pray:

God, you have declared that we are your beloved creation, made in your image. You have formed our minds, our bodies, and our spirits to be good. You have offered us life in abundance. We say together “Loving God, we give you thanks”.

***Loving God, we give you thanks.***

Too often we have failed to see ourselves as your beloved children. Too often we have not cared for your creation. Too often we have neglected your offer of abundant life. We say together, “Loving God, forgive us”.

***Loving God, forgive* us.**

We know love because you loved us first. We flourish in your love, as we express your love among ourselves and with our neighbors. We find safety and peace in the beloved community of faith. We say together “Loving God, we give you thanks”.

***Loving God, we give you thanks.***

Too often we have concealed our sorrow, anger, and pain. Too often we have neglected to offer prayers of kindness, and to give words of hope and signs of care. Too often we have spoken or kept silence in ways that hurt ourselves or another. We say together, “Loving God, forgive us”.

***Loving God, forgive us.***

God, you have shown us the way of life. We have followed Jesus, who proved what it means to be kind and faithful and strong. You have placed before us the challenge and joy of life. We say together “Loving God, we give you thanks”.

***Loving God, we give you thanks.***

Too often we are tempted to give in to our fears. Too often we are tempted to deny your faithful love. Fear, death, and denial of your love—these we lay down.

And together we will say, “We step into life”. ***We step into life.***

***AMEN***

**Peace Greeting:**

*Patrick:* Be assured that God offers us grace. Nothing will separate us from God in Christ Jesus. He told his followers, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. . . . Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.” (John 14:27). With that in mind let us now extend the peace of Christ to those we can see and those a part of our faith community important to us and not present today. [30-45 seconds, or as long as it takes]

**Words of Institution:**

*Susanne:* Friends, the Risen Christ came to meet his disciples on wayward roads and in locked rooms. The Risen Christ finds us wherever we happen to be: disciples on a walk, disciples in closed rooms, disciples far and near ~~hither and yon~~. We rejoice that the Risen Christ comes to us where we are!

As was his custom, Jesus took bread and after giving thanks broke it saying, this is my body that is given to you. Do this in remembrance of me (*Luke 22:19*) (*lift and break bread*). We join to together in prayer:

God of grace, your mercy and goodness overflow each day, filling us with a harvest of love. We thank you for this bread of Christ, blessed by earth, hand, and heaven. May your Spirit feed us with this bread, nourishing our bodies, minds, and spirits. Take and eat for Jesus sustains us in all times and places. AMEN. [*We take and eat*]

*P:* And Jesus took the cup saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (*Luke 22:20*). We join together in prayer:

 God of love, your faithfulness roots our lives, holding us with patience and grace. Thank you for this cup of Christ, blessed by earth, hand, and heaven. May your Spirit satisfy us with this cup, quenching the thirsts of our bodies, minds, and spirits. AMEN. Take and drink. (*We take and drink*)

**Post-Communion Prayer and Benediction:**

*Susanne:* Loving God, by your Spirit, let the bread we have broken and the cup we have shared be a communion with Christ and one another. By your Spirit, bind us in communion with all creation. By your Spirit, empower us to offer your abundant life to the world you love.

Remembering these gifts of grace, we celebrate and give you thanks.

United with Christ and with all who stand before you in earth and heaven, we worship you, O God, in everlasting praise. We bless you for nourishing us in the love of this community and for sustaining us in hope.

**Patrick: Benediction:** (HWB 787 (adapted))

Gracious, merciful, and loving God,

 we have gathered in your presence together to celebrate Pentecost:

* The gift of Jesus’ life and teaching
* the memorial of Jesus’ love for us and our world
* the gift of his Spirit which continues to guide us

May Christ live in us and we in him.

Give us assurance through the breaking of bread and cup that we are partakers of your covenant and on-going ministry. May we grow in faith, love, and willingness to live in imitation of Jesus Christ. In his name we pray. AMEN.

**Closing Hymn: Be Present at Our Table, Lord - HWB 457**

[Susanne invites those who wish to stay for conversation]

1. James Alison, <http://prayingeucharistically.com/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Tyler Hartford, <https://www.revivalsauce.com/blog/communiontogether> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Adapted from *Leader Magazine*, Summer 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)