

APRIL 2021



Reverend David Exley
Lead Minister
(519) 472-6071 Ext. 222

"Starting With the Empty Tomb"

During the season of Lent, a group of us have been gathering online via Zoom to discuss Richard Rohr's most recent book, *The Universal Christ*. It is a groundbreaking book (a New York Times Best-selling book, in fact) that deals with both the message of Jesus and the meaning of the word "Christ". In the book, Rohr reminds us that "Christ" isn't Jesus' last name; it's something more. He offers this transformative thought—that Christ is "another name for everything" OR "a name for the transcendent within of every 'thing' in the universe." As he explores this theme, not only does he invite the reader to consider how we might see the face of Christ in all things, but he also explores what it looks like to participate in this "Christ reality" as followers in the way of Jesus. It is a beautiful reflection on the Christian faith and has enlightened me on matters pertaining to faith, love, and grace.

Not surprisingly, many of Rohr's reflections shine a light on what it means to be an "Easter people"; people who are learning to walk in the light of the resurrection. What does it look like to participate in God's resurrection story? Perhaps a good place to start is something that Rohr mentions in the book. Early in the book Rohr highlights the work of St. Bonaventure (1221–1274), who "taught that to work up to loving God, start by loving the very humblest and simplest

things, and then move up from there." I can't think of a better way to begin the Easter season. The gospel writers invite us to begin with an empty tomb and instruct us to "move up from there." Like many of Jesus' parables, if we can start with the small things, we will see growth that knows no boundaries. Our faith doesn't begin and end with the empty tomb. The empty tomb is the small thing that leads to something larger. It is the seed that can sprout into something beautiful.

Walking in the light of the resurrection is something we can only do one step at a time. As we walk with



Jesus, we are invited to do something simple: love the small things and move up and out from there. Every time we smile at a stranger, we are participating in the work of the Resurrected Christ. Every time we forgive and offer mercy to those around us, we are participating in the Christ Mystery. The work may seem small (and will often feel insignificant), but when we work

together to participate in the work of Christ, we will see the kind of transformation that God longs to see in the world.

Friends, as you consider how to follow in the way of Jesus this Easter season, begin with the Empty Tomb and move out from there. Learn to love "the very humblest and simplest things, and then move up from there." As you do so, each day will become easier, and you'll see God's light shining brighter. Christ is alive in all things! **Alleluia! Amen!**

Rev. Dave



Marilyn Arthur
 Director of Children and Youth Ministries-
 Recognized Designated Lay Minister
 (519) 472-6071 Ext. 223

Happy Easter! I love this time of the year. Easter, the resurrection, reminds us of new life, hope and the opportunity

for new possibilities for our lives. I find it delightful at this time of the year to take a walk around my house, and in the neighbourhood paying attention to the new growth that surrounds us.

This past year has allowed us to slow down, to take more time and pay more attention to certain things we might have missed in our busy lives before the pandemic. I feel fortunate to have had more time to observe the growth of buds in my flowerbeds, the greening of the grass and the opportunity to observe growth in myself and my loved ones.

My hope is that you have been able to spend some time in your lives paying attention to the growth and new life that surrounds you.

Since January our confirmands and mentors have been meeting together every few weeks for themed discussions and community building through Zoom video conferencing. Each week the confirmand and their mentor also meet together to talk about the topics they find in their resource 'Making Disciples'.

I am thankful for the 6 young people who are embarking on this confirmation journey and their mentors for walking alongside them. The program will

conclude at the end of May. When we are able to safely gather in person, we will have a confirmation celebration in worship with our 4 confirmands from last year (2020) and this year's confirmands.

One of the topics we shared together on Zoom was centred around the Holy Spirit. We had a rich and meaningful discussion about how we describe the Holy Spirit in a few words. Here are some of the responses:

The Holy Spirit for me is:

a powerful force

INSPIRATION!

*like the wind
 (I can't see it but I can feel it)*

a mystery...

peace

JUSTICE

beyond our imagination

always present within me

EMPOWERMENT

**calming me when I am afraid
 and allowing me to move forward,
 and helping me feel that I am
 doing the right thing**

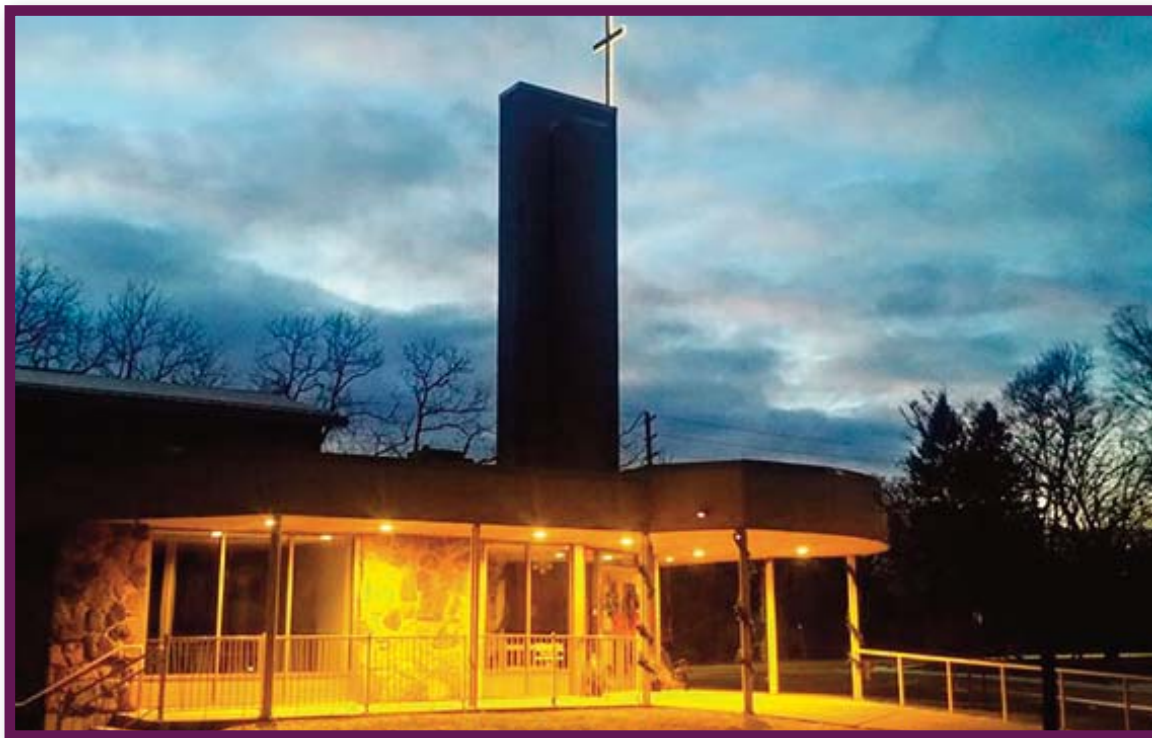
"The Holy Spirit for me is: a powerful force, inspiration, like the wind (I can't see it but I can feel it), a mystery, peace, justice, beyond our imagination, always present within me, empowerment, calming me when I am afraid and allowing me to move forward, and helping me feel that I am doing the "right thing." One person drew a dove to describe the Holy Spirit.

I was inspired by the in-depth responses from our young people and their mentors to this question. I encouraged them to pay attention to how the Holy Spirit works in and through them, and how they feel when that happens.

How do you describe the Holy Spirit? How does the Holy Spirit work within you?

May this Easter season bless you with hope, grace, the opportunity to look around and share in new life and new possibilities. Thanks be to God.

With love and care,
Marilyn Arthur



ONE YEAR LATER

On March 11th the world marked the one-year anniversary of the declaration of COVID-19 as a global pandemic and we marked Riverside's decision to close our doors and transition to online worship services. For many, the anniversary reminded people of one full year isolated from friends and loved ones. One full year of life as we know it, thrown into complete disarray. What a year it has been!

As you can imagine, it has been difficult not seeing and feeling the congregation's presence within the walls of Riverside. Despite the challenges of doing church in a global pandemic, there were many times throughout the year that our community came together to support one another — Zoom communion celebrations, coffee calls, book studies, special Christmas services, important outreach activities, and mailings such as our monthly Newsletter and the Sermon Mailer.

These moments of connection could not have happened without the leadership of Rev Dave, Jen, Marilyn and our entire staff team, the leadership of Council and Committees, and the support of our extremely dedicated volunteers. I also want to give a

special mention to Betsy and Marque who safely recorded songs that added beautiful music to our Sunday online worship services.

Thank you for showing up online Sunday after Sunday. For attending mid-week groups on Zoom. For volunteering, participating in an event, or emailing your encouragement and feedback. As we look forward to the rest of 2021, our goal is to safely host in-person events in controlled numbers, while not limiting those who feel more comfortable online. We are grateful for the technology that allows this to happen.

We wait for the day we can all be together safely. Until then, please consider joining a group or committee, our congregational care team, or a prayer group. We would welcome an email from you about your interests. Please send you emails to jan@riverside.on.ca.

Best wishes to you all.
Bill Gray, Council Chair



Riverside Council & Office Announcements

Results for the Election of Trustees

Introducing Our Newest Trustees!

The Nominations Committee would like to take this opportunity to inform you that **Cheryl Partington** and **Ken Forbes** were recently elected to the role of Trustee to Riverside United Church.

The election took place via our first Zoom Congregational meeting on March 21, 2021 as per the process laid out by the Antler River Watershed Regional Council.

We thank Cheryl and Ken for stepping up into this important role as well as the other previously elected Trustees.

Our 2021-22 Trustees are as follows:

- ~
- Carol Atkinson**
Rev. Dave Exley (Chair)
Stella Finkbeiner
Ken Forbes
John Mitchell
Peter O'Hara
Cheryl Partington
- ~

Thank you.
Nominations Committee



Jan Shamrock
Administrative Assistant
(519) 472-6071 Ext. 221

Our Church Family:

In Hospital: Please keep the following people in your prayers: Sandra Sinker, Jack Robb, Edna Brown – LHSC, University Campus. If you are aware of anyone in the hospital, please call the church office at 519-472-6071 x221

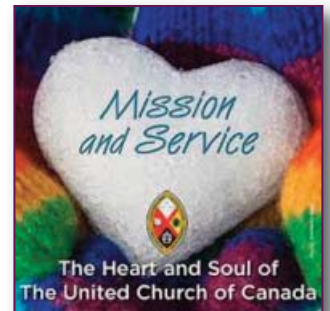
Our Condolences: Our sympathy is extended to the family of George Varkey who passed away early this week. A memorial service took place at Westview Funeral Chapel on Sunday (March 28) at 2pm.

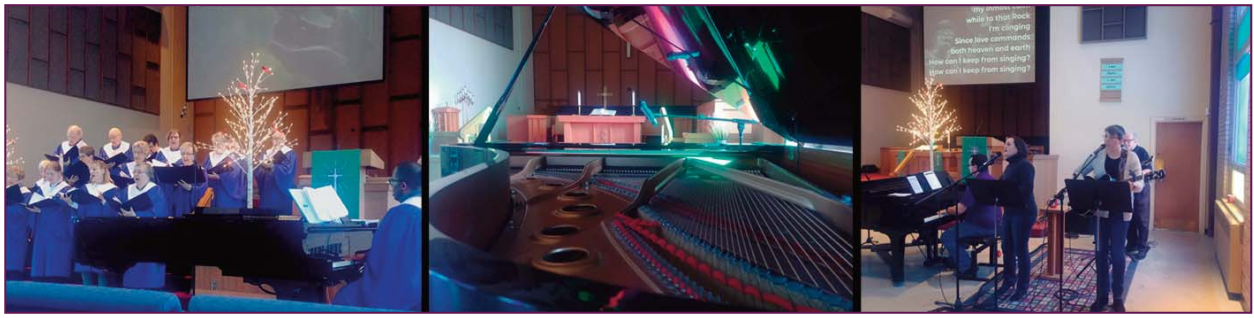
Thank You: Betty Thornton and family would like to thank the congregation for the cards, calls and donations offered following the passing of Betty's husband, Bob.

The M6:8 Outreach Committee would like to sincerely thank Pat Mack for being Riverside's Mission and Service Enthusiast these past several years. She has faithfully reminded us of the valuable contributions that M & S make in Canada and around the world. Pat has decided to step away from this work.

The position is open to anyone who may be inspired to share these messages with us. Please contact any Outreach Committee member if you are that person! On the committee Greg Schneider, Connie Zolotar, Teri Levack, Donna Smith, Ken Fraser, Joan Young, Wayne Hufford, Jen Prince, Marilyn Arthur, Becky Young.

Church Office: The church office will be closed on Good Friday, April 2 and Easter Monday, April 5.





Introducing ‘your favorite hymns’ for the month of April !

“We Are Marching” (Siyahamba)

Voices United #646

This hymn originated in South Africa as a Zulu folk song. It is popular today as a processional and offertory as well as a protest or marching song. I grew to love it when our daughter and the Amabile Youth Singers sang the African and English words during their tours in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. While visiting Hekima Place in Kenya with Kim Logan in 2012, I found myself humming the simple words, “We Are Marching in the Light of God.” (Wendy Skinner)

“These Are The Days”

by Van Morrison

Because it is a song that expresses the appreciation of what we have in life and provides a hopeful message about the future. (Bill Gray)

“Share the Roses Never Fade”

This hymn was sung at my wife Sandy’s Celebration of Life in Dec. 2020. This hymn provides understanding and confirmation that Life in Heaven is a certainty and that those we love, who have passed before us, will come to greet us and welcome us to eternal life with Christ. (Ed Lipskey)

“Love is Bigger Than Anything in Its Way”

I don’t know if this counts, but my favourite 844 worship song is the U2 cover "Love is Bigger Than Anything in Its Way." It is such a song of hope and a resurrection statement. There are so many things in most people’s lives and the world at large that threaten our sense of God’s love being more powerful than despair; and this song revives that sense. (Jen Prince)

“Hallelujah Chorus,” “Eagles Wings” and “I Lord of Sea and Sky”

We turn to these beautiful songs for inspiration and strength in times of sadness or Joy. My heart swells when we sing the

Hallelujah Chorus at Easter time. My most favorite hymn and one that always brings me to tears is I Lord of Sea & Sky, and Eagles Wing embraces me with hope and assurance during sad or challenging times.

(Ann Bateman-Capers)

“Jooni Kaci Ya Pooy Cooditi”

(My Son, You Started the Way of Living - Translated from Mabaan)

This is a tradition Hymn sung in my village in Mabaan. I like it because the song speaks a lot about my life journey and the struggles I have faced. It reminds us that struggles make us who we are and helps us to see that with faith we should never regret the hardships we have encountered. (Sila Joshua)





London Community Chaplaincy

Spring has sprung at the Chaplaincy and we are excited to enjoy outdoor programs with the Chaplaincy families! As the weather gets warmer, many of us are looking forward to getting outside and taking in the fresh air. For many, this will mean spending some time in the garden, or tidying up the yard!

This year, the London Community Chaplaincy is partnering with BigYellowBag, a local company that delivers high quality garden products in a neat, environmentally friendly, clean bag straight to your door. BigYellowBag has offered to donate \$10 to the Chaplaincy for each bag purchased using our unique code below (this code is only valid for donations to come to the London Community Chaplaincy). Use of this code will also save you \$5 on your BigYellowBag purchase. This promotion can be combined with any others they offer (an additional \$20 off if you order before April 20th)!

So if you are in need of soil or mulch for your yard this year, please keep us in your thoughts! You can share a bag with a neighbour as well. It's perfect for reseeding the grass, levelling for a pool, and improving your garden beds! Chaplain Pam ordered one last year and really liked the product.

Please share this email with those in your circle...every dollar really helps us and will go towards creating amazon summer memories for the families at the Chaplaincy this summer!

YOU SAVE \$5, WE DONATE \$10!!!

BigYellowBag®
GIVE & GROW

Visit BigYellowBag.com and enter the code below to receive an additional \$5 off any current promotions.

CHAPLAIN21

Cannot be combined with any other loyalty code offers. Must take delivery in Greenhorizons Delivery Zones.

BigYellowBag Black Garden Soil

\$10 from every bag you buy goes to London Community Chaplaincy!

London Community Chaplaincy, 2021

Our mailing address is: P.O. Box 37085 900 Adelaide St. London, ON N6E 3T3
londoncommunitychaplaincy.com