

April 14, 2024 + 10:30 A.M.

Third Sunday of Easter

We Join in Worship

*If you need extra space for a wheelchair or walker, or if you have young children with you, please feel free to make use of our Prayground, the extra space across the aisle from the sound booth.*

**PRELUDE** *God Himself is Present*

**WELCOME**

**CHORAL INTROIT**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**\*THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP** (Adapted from *Song of Songs 2*)

Leader: Here, the winter is past; the rains have come and gone.

**ALL: Blossoms have appeared in the land; the season of singing has arrived, and the sound of the birds is heard in our land.**

Leader: The green fruit is on the fig tree, and the grapevines in bloom are fragrant.

**ALL: Let us rise up! Let us spend time with our Beloved, with our God who is Love!**

**\*OPENING HYMN:** "In the Bulb There Is a Flower" (Glory to God 250)

**INVITATION TO CONFESSION:**

Leader: The author of *1 John* writes, "Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness." With the recognition that all of us are law breakers, let us confess our sins to God.

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION** (unison)

**O God, we know that we have broken your law of love, but we come to you as your children to make confession and offer repentance. We confess that all too often we do not recognize that you are in our midst. We go about our daily lives, walking our well-trod paths, without looking up. You are always right there beside us, but our hearts and eyes are closed. We get trapped in thoughtless tasks and let our days waste away without intentionally seeking you. You are always right there beside us, but our eyes are closed. You are always present within us, but our hearts are closed. Open our eyes that we may see. Open our hearts that we may feel. In the name of Jesus Christ, the gardener of new life, we pray. Amen.**

**KYRIE:** No. 572 (unison)

**Lord, have mercy upon us.**

**Christ, have mercy upon us.**

**Lord, have mercy upon us.**

**ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Leader: Beloved, we are God's children now. Through the resurrected Christ we have been adopted and made whole.

**ALL: Jesus Christ is risen! Hallelujah! Thanks be to God!**

**GLORIA PATRI:** No. 579 (unison)

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;**

**As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.**

**STATEMENT OF FAITH:** (from *The Scots Confession*)

Leader: We undoubtedly believe, since it was impossible that the sorrows of death should retain in bondage the Author of life,

**ALL: That our Lord Jesus crucified, dead, and buried, who descended into hell, did rise again for our justification, and the destruction of him who was the author of death, and brought life again to us who were subject to death and its bondage.**

Leader: We know that his resurrection was confirmed by the testimony of his enemies, and by the resurrection of the dead, whose sepulchres did open, and they did rise and appear to many within the city of Jerusalem.

**ALL: It was also confirmed by the testimony of his angels, and by the senses and judgment of his apostles and of others, who had conversation, and did eat and drink with him after his resurrection. Amen.**

**SPECIAL MUSIC** Isabelle Orem

<b>We Hear God's Word</b>
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**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**Almighty God, through your only Son you overcame death and opened to us the light of eternity.**

**Enlighten our minds and kindle our hearts with the presence of your Spirit, that we may hear your words of comfort and challenge in the reading of the scriptures. In the name of Jesus Christ, the gardener of new life, we pray. Amen.**

**HEBREW BIBLE LESSON** *Psalm 4*

**EPISTLE LESSON** *1 John 3:1-7*

**GOSPEL LESSON** *Luke 24:13-35*

**SERMON** Planting the Seeds of New Life

**MUSICAL MEDITATION** *I Choose You* Deborah Governor

<b>We Respond in Faith</b>
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**PRAYER SHAWL BLESSING**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

**LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

**OFFERTORY** *Flower of Love*

Cassler/Christiansen

## OFFERING INVITATION:

Leader: God is in our midst. Jesus is walking with us on the journey. Let us give our tithes and offerings so that we might accompany others as the body of Christ in the world today and plant seeds of new life upon the way. If you did not do so as you entered, please place your offering in the plate as you leave. If you are worshiping from home, please mail in your checks or use our online giving option on the website.

## DOXOLOGY (Instrumental)

## PRAYER OF DEDICATION: (Unison)

O God, we thank you for your persistent presence with us on our journeys. We dedicate these gifts to the work of planting seeds of new life as we accompany others. In the name of Jesus Christ, the gardener of new life, we pray. Amen.

<b>We Go into the World</b>
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\* **CLOSING HYMN:** “Just a Closer Walk with Thee” (Glory to God 835)

## BENEDICTION

## CHORAL BENEDICTION

**POSTLUDE** *Give Praise to God*

Paul S. Jones

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\* So that we can properly greet people who come to the building during Sunday morning worship, Door A will be the only unlocked external door during the worship service.

<b>Life of the Church</b>
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### PEEK AT THE WEEK:

SUNDAY 4/14:	Adult Study – 9:00 AM Worship In Person & Online – 10:30 AM Reception for Pastor Tyler & Vima’s Marriage
MONDAY 4/15:	GA – 6:30 PM Al-Anon – 7:00 PM
TUESDAY 4/16:	Session – 6:30 PM
WEDNESDAY 4/17:	“Bring Your Own Bible” Bible Study 7-8 PM (Zoom) GA – 7:00 PM
THURSDAY 4/18:	Administrative Commission Meeting – 12:30 PM Choir – 7:00 PM
SATURDAY 4/20:	Gladys’ Table Meal Prep

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **SPIRITUALITY CENTER** The Spirituality Center across the hall from the church offices is still open! There is a variety of prayer and reflection stations to go through at your leisure. The stations are different than last year, so you are invited to check out the Spirituality Center as you're able to help your journey and reflections through April 15th. To request an at-home guide, call the church office or email Heather Casiano at [hcasiano@fpchighland.org](mailto:hcasiano@fpchighland.org).
- **SANCTUARY LABYRINTH** Take some time before or after worship or during office hours on weekdays to prayerfully walk the labyrinth lovingly created for our sanctuary!
- **CAPITAL CAMPAIGN: SANCTUARY AIR CONDITIONING AND HEATING** This is the final Sunday for our capital campaign! Please consider giving what you can in order to make this space welcoming and accessible to all with adequate air conditioning and heating. Write "Capital Campaign" on your envelopes or check memo lines.
- **CALLING ALL GRADUATES!** The 2023-2024 school year is almost over! We would like to recognize all the graduates in our church community. If you or someone in your family is graduating from high school or any higher education this year as part of the Class of 2024, we'd like to know. Please email Heather Casiano, [hcasiano@fpchighland.org](mailto:hcasiano@fpchighland.org), or call the church office, with the graduate's name and a brief bio that we can print in our newsletter. You can include things like the name of the school they are graduating from, future plans (college, career, military, etc.), any special awards or recognitions, sports, community organizations or other activities they are involved with, and any other details that would help us celebrate the graduate. If you have a recent picture of the graduate that we can publish, please include that as well. These should be sent to Heather no later than April 18. We will also be celebrating our graduates with special recognition during one of the worship services in May. Graduates and families will be contacted with more details as it gets closer
- **THE BIBLE IN TODAY'S WORLD CLASS** meets on Sunday mornings at 9 am in the upstairs meeting room. We are using "The Difficult Words of Jesus: A Beginner's Guide to His Most Perplexing Teachings" by Dr. Amy-Jill Levine. Come explore and learn with us! Contact John Toren or Heather Casiano with any questions.
- **BYOB IS BACK!** The Wednesday evening "BYOB" (Bring Your Own Bible) discussion group will begin meeting again on April 10, and will meet weekly through May 15. BYOB meets online on Zoom from 7-8 pm. We are currently focusing on the churchwide theme "New Life in God's Garden" and exploring scripture passages related to gardens and gardening. Each week is independent of the other weeks, so you can join in whenever you're available without missing a lesson. The link to join the Zoom meetings is emailed out weekly. If you are not on the email list and would like to be, contact Kristen in the church office or Heather Casiano.
- **SPRING READ-A-LONG AND BOOK DISCUSSION** Faith Development is sponsoring a spring read-a-long on a timely subject for this year. The book is "Thou Shalt Not Be Jerk: A Christian's Guide to Engaging Politics" by Eugene Cho. For more information about the book and author, see the article in the April Larger View. You're encouraged to start reading the book this month. This book, originally published in 2020, and our discussions, will not endorse any candidates or political parties, so no matter where you may find yourself on the vast spectrum of thought, there is room for all voices. There will be several ways to engage in discussion:
  - \* A private Facebook group for this read-a-long available starting on April 16
  - \* A Zoom discussion on the first half of the book on May 22 at 6:30 pm
  - \* An in-person discussion of last half of the book on June 12 at 6:30 pmWe have 5 copies of this book at the church that can be checked out to read. Please sign the check-out sheet when you take a book, and sign it back in when you are finished so more people may enjoy the book. "Thou Shalt Not Be A Jerk" is also available in paperback and as an e-book (Kindle) through many retailers and bookstores.

- **FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!** If you don't already follow First Presbyterian Church of Highland on Facebook and Instagram, please start doing so and sharing our posts with your friends! Find us @firstpchighland on both Facebook and Instagram.
- **JOIN US FOR FELLOWSHIP AFTER WORSHIP** Every Sunday after worship we have delicious snacks, coffee, lemonade, and conversation. Join us for this vital part of our life together!
- **INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER OF FPCH?** You are always welcome here, whether a member or not! If you are interested in joining as a member, though, we would love to have you! Please talk to Pastor Tyler if you would like to learn more.

**Opportunities to serve as the HEART, HANDS, and FEET of Jesus Christ:**

- **BLESSING BOX** OUR BLESSING BOX IS LOW ON FUNDS AND SUPPLIES. DONATIONS ARE WELCOME! Please continue to place items in the Blessing Box and take items if you are a person in need! Items most commonly donated: Canned goods with pull tabs, socks, toilet paper, non-perishable foods, small snacks, toiletries, baby wipes and diapers. Please check expiration dates!
- **HELP STOCK OUR PANTRY!** Please pick up a beautifully decorated grocery bag in the narthex to help the church's food pantry. We'd love to have you take a bag home, place some non-perishable food items in the bag, and bring it back to the church to help keep our pantry stocked!
- **BIN OF HUGS** Bring in clean, gently used stuffed animals for distribution to migrant families with young children who need the joy of loving welcome!

## Prayer List

Anthony  
George Nelson  
Brady Vanes  
George Griner  
Guy Hendricks  
Bill and Anettia Holmes  
Daniel Litwicki  
David Markley  
Pat and David Kingen  
Diana and Ray Mendoza  
Janet Orem  
Jeanne Nestor  
Cindy Waltz and Sister  
Yvonne Suroviak  
Wendy  
Georgette Sknerski  
Jakob Holden  
Denise Matthys  
Steve & Melinda  
Gary Studer  
Jan Oprea  
Janet Vargo  
Ric Jaeggi  
Florance Cody  
Josephine Kim  
Carol Figley  
Kathy & Chuck Pumnea  
Nick  
Laura Buono Domsic  
The Windstrups  
Ruth Dekker  
Rick Parker  
Gary Everhart  
Gale Osterby  
Bonnie Kern  
Collin & Kathy Stein  
Peter  
Tim

Barbara Morton  
Caroline Studer  
Cary & Jennifer Pearson  
Holly Letnich  
Jaden Mendez  
Frank Falzone  
Doug & Sue Matthews  
Robert Urich  
Richard Simmons  
Janet Terpstra  
Glen Nahler  
Tammy  
Tom  
Jana Tolley  
Larry & Bonnie Perryman  
Virginia Marshall  
Delta Rose  
Paulina Martinez  
Winnie Owen  
Charity Lynn  
Chestine  
Shannon  
David Hamblin  
Judy  
Breeanne  
Joe Petersen  
Susan Agbor  
Mom Bechtler  
A Close Friend  
Gloria  
John Shields  
John Miramontes  
Colton Bobonick  
Cletus  
Mary  
Victor  
Mary Ellen Edeus

## Psalm 4

- <sup>1</sup> Answer me when I call, O God of my right!  
You gave me room when I was in distress.  
Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.
- <sup>2</sup> How long, you people, shall my honor suffer shame?  
How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? *Selah*
- <sup>3</sup> But know that the Lord has set apart the faithful for himself;  
the Lord hears when I call to him.
- <sup>4</sup> When you are disturbed, do not sin;  
ponder it on your beds, and be silent. *Selah*
- <sup>5</sup> Offer right sacrifices,  
and put your trust in the Lord.
- <sup>6</sup> There are many who say, "O that we might see some good!  
Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord!"
- <sup>7</sup> You have put gladness in my heart  
more than when their grain and wine abound.
- <sup>8</sup> I will both lie down and sleep in peace,  
for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety.

## 1 John 3:1-7

<sup>3</sup> <sup>1</sup> See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup> Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. <sup>3</sup> And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

<sup>4</sup> Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. <sup>5</sup> You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. <sup>6</sup> No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. <sup>7</sup> Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

## Luke 24:13-35

<sup>13</sup> Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup> and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup> While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, <sup>16</sup> but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup> And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. <sup>18</sup> Then 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?" <sup>19</sup> He 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, <sup>20</sup> and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. <sup>21</sup> But 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. <sup>22</sup> Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, <sup>23</sup> and 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.

<sup>24</sup> Some 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.” <sup>25</sup> Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” <sup>27</sup> Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

<sup>28</sup> As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. <sup>29</sup> But 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. <sup>30</sup> When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup> They 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?” <sup>33</sup> That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. <sup>34</sup> They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” <sup>35</sup> Then they told what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

### **Planting the Seeds of New Life**

*Psalm 4; 1 John 3:1-7; Luke 24:13-35*

Over the last two weeks we have experienced new life in God’s garden, and oh what a joy it has been! First we found Mary Magdalene in the garden on Golgotha, grieving for her beloved teacher, only to find him alive again tending the garden. Jesus Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed!** Hallelujah! **Hallelujah!** Then we met God in the very first garden with the very first human, breathing the breath of life into them and then attuning to their needs, an act that was embodied with beautiful symmetry by Jesus attuning to the needs of all humanity with his life, death, and resurrection and then attuning to the needs of his disciples upon rising again by meeting them in the Upper Room and breathing the breath of new life into them. Jesus Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed!** Hallelujah! **Hallelujah!** And so in God’s garden thus far we have come to know the gardener who gives us new life and the soil that forms and nourishes us all, the mud from which we are made. Today we meet our gardener on a pathway planting the seeds of new life into some of his disciples whom we have not yet met.

I am, of course, reminded of a parable he once told: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup> As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup> Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. <sup>8</sup> Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.” This gardener, of course, knows his work. After all, this gardener was the very Word through which Creation occurred!

There upon that pathway he presented himself in such a way that he would not be recognized. Perhaps he looked exactly as he had out of the corner of Mary Magdalene’s eye back in the garden on Golgotha, as a common garden laborer. In this *guise* that was true to his nature but seemed to be a *disguise* in front of these two *guys*, or at least two people, on the pathway, he was ready to plant some good seeds in some good soil! He said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” Their immediate response always strikes me. Up until now their story has been one of motion. They are pedestrians on the pathway to Emmaus, and this stranger joins them in motion on their walk. When he asks them about their conversation, though, the motion completely stops. As the text says, “They stood still, looking sad.” Jesus’ simple inquiry stopped them in their tracks.

Anytime there is such a dramatic pause in a story, we are invited to pause ourselves and pay special attention. And here we witness two things. First, these two journeyers are sad. They are sad about something that has happened, and they are sad about having to share the news of it with this stranger on the road. Second, the news they have to share must be known far and wide by this point, for they are also incredulous that this stranger does not already know the news. And so, in their sorrow and incredulity, they share about the one who was supposed to redeem Israel but who ended up being condemned and crucified. It is now the third day since his death, and although they have heard a fantastical story about his body being gone and angels telling of his being alive again, they must not believe it because they are still sad.

Alright, let's press play again. The gardener said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" And then we get to the part that I consider to be the planting of seeds. The Word made flesh, who was now in resurrected flesh spoke the words that would cause the possibility of new life to grow into their consciousness and then flourish. He spoke the message of the Kingdom to them.

You see, this great gardener, of course, was also a great teacher. And this was precisely a teaching moment. As a stranger on the road (dare I say a neighbor who placed himself upon their pathway?), he taught these two disciples exactly what had happened. He spoke to them in a way that made them understand and in a way that they could use as an example in their further conversations with other people. He gave them the words they would need in order to spread the good news with truth and grace and yield a crop thirty, sixty, even a hundred times what was sown! In his own grace, he only appeared to them gradually. He knew all too well that a sudden appearance in his full glory would shock them and again stop them in their tracks and take away that teachability of it all. He would get there, but first he had to give them the tools to keep on keepin' on, as this is what would keep the movement alive and ensure that the garden would keep growing.

Over the course of the seven miles that it takes to get from Jerusalem to Emmaus, he planted the seeds of new life by using a tried and true method that I know we all associate with wonder and excitement and the spice of life. He taught them a history lesson. Come on, surely I'm not the only one here who experiences a thrill in learning history! Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. I know the story does not pause here, but I want us to pause for a moment. Can you imagine what a journey that must have been for these two? Seven whole miles of hearing the entirety of the messianic scriptures being interpreted to them by the messiah himself? How often do we read the scriptures and wish that we could have Jesus right there telling us what these dense and confounding and often contradictory texts actually mean? Yes, even if they did not yet know it, these two were surely blessed!

The coldness that had gripped their hearts with the death of their longed for messiah and then that had iced over with the disappearance of the body began to thaw. They could see all the evidence now, going back to the time of Moses. The flame of their passion was rekindled, warming the frozen soil. The seeds within them began to germinate, with the newborn tendrils of life started to drive away all the fear and grief and disbelief. And clearly the message of their messiah got through, because their first act after hearing the history lesson on the road was to invite this complete stranger into their home. Their heads were awash with the data and details of philosophy, theology, and history that had just been poured in by the stranger. But their hearts saw clearly the heart of all that had been spoken.

"Let him in! Welcome him!" Radical hospitality. Love of the stranger. Welcome without condition.

"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. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him." In that instant they realized that they were in the presence of their Lord, the presence of their messiah, the presence of their very God. He was risen from the dead indeed! Who knows, maybe they wouldn't have believed if he hadn't taught them so gently and faithfully on that pathway to Emmaus.

But there's more to it than that. I think that Jesus finally revealed himself to them because he now had the assurance that they were ready to carry on once he was gone. They had invited him in as a stranger. They had given him food as a stranger. They had shared their conversation with him as a stranger. They had shown love to him as a stranger. Not because he was their lord, messiah, and very God. But because he needed a place to rest and food to eat. Because he was a fellow human on this journey of life. And he had always taught them that the table was open for everyone, especially those in need. And here they had made it clear that they understood the heart of everything.

And so, he vanished from their sight. They 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?" That flame in their hearts grew to an unquenchable blaze. They rushed back to Jerusalem to join the other disciples. The women had been right! Jesus Christ was risen indeed!

Friends, do you ever feel your heart burning within you? When things feel right and whole? When things feel exciting and passionate? When you have that sense that you may be in the presence of the holy? The message of Emmaus is that we should feel that burning every single time we welcome the stranger, the immigrant, the wayfarer on the journey without question, without qualification, without condition. We should feel that burning when we open our table to all, when we break bread with all, when we share in community with all.

And we should always, always, always pay attention to that burning of rightness, passion, and excitement in our hearts. For, if we truly allow ourselves to feel the sensation of that flame within us, our eyes will start to open. We will see the truth that the presence of the risen lord, the presence of our very God, the presence of the holy is there in the stranger, the immigrant, the wayfarer on the journey of life. And this truth above all other truths is the sweetest fruit of vine that grows from the seeds of new life.

This is a truth that has always been fundamental to our faith. This is a truth that *will always* be fundamental to our faith, as attested to in Matthew 25: "Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"

Friends, unconditional love and welcome are the heart of who we are, for this is the heart of the resurrection. In the greatest act of unconditional love that ever was and ever will be, Jesus attuned to humanity's collective need and died for all, no matter who they were and no matter what they had done. And the curtain that separated the people from the presence of God was torn into two. And the Word made flesh arose from the tomb, decisively welcoming everybody into the presence of the living, breathing God—welcoming everybody who ever was and everybody who ever will be into right relationship with God once more, healing something fundamental that had been broken back in that first garden at the beginning of it all.

Now, I know, that it is quite easy for me to stand before you and lift up unconditional love and welcome. But it is certainly not always easy in practice to do so. We are bombarded on the daily by messages of division and the solidification of other-ness. We are told to hate and exclude because of immigration status or religion or race or sexual orientation or gender identification. These messages enter into our society's structures, into social systems, and then into our very selves. They become like thorns, choking the promise of new life right out of us. We start to question others' worthiness, sincerity, and even their very right to live. And in this way, just like those crowds in Jerusalem long ago, our shouts of welcome and love become jeers of death. Instead of opening our borders to welcome in the stranger, we build up our walls and our detention centers and deportation forces.

Instead of opening our doors to welcome in the stranger, we stick out our guns and shoot. Instead of opening our hearts to welcome in the stranger, we build up our internal walls and raise our internal weapons and allow fear and hatred to ruin our souls.

What would happen, though, if we truly lived our lives as the people of the Resurrection, as the people who carry within us the seeds of new life? What would happen if every time we look across the border or through our screen doors or in the streets, we see the face of Jesus, the strangest stranger of all? I truly believe that we would transform the world, we would bring new life, we would enact Resurrection. Are your hearts burning within you? Mine sure is! Amen!

# In the Bulb There Is a Flower 250

## Hymn of Promise

Capo 3: (D)  
F (Em)  
Gm

1 In the bulb there is a flow - er; in the seed, an ap - ple tree;  
2 There's a song in ev - ery si - lence, seek - ing word and mel - o - dy;  
3 In our end is our be - gin - ning; in our time, in - fin - i - ty;

(A7) (D)  
C7 F

in co - coons, a hid - den prom - ise; but - ter - flies will soon be free!  
there's a dawn in ev - ery dark - ness, bring - ing hope to you and me.  
in our doubt there is be - liev - ing; in our life, e - ter - ni - ty.

(D7) (G) (Em) (D) (Bm) (Em) (F#) (Bm)  
F7 Bb Gm F Dm Gm A Dm

In the cold and snow of win - ter there's a spring that waits to be,  
From the past will come the fu - ture; what it holds, a mys - ter - y,  
In our death, a res - ur - rec - tion; at the last, a vic - to - ry,

(G) (Em) (D) (Bm) (Em) (A7) (D)  
Bb Gm F Dm Gm C7 F

un - re - vealed un - til its sea - son, some - thing God a - lone can see.

The writing of this hymn was spurred by a line from the poet T. S. Eliot: "In my end is my beginning."  
Shortly after this piece was completed, the author/composer's husband was diagnosed with what proved to be a terminal malignancy, and the original anthem version of this hymn was sung at his funeral.

# Just a Closer Walk with Thee 835

Refrain Just a clos - er walk with thee, grant it,  
 1 I am weak, but thou art strong; Je - sus,  
 2 Through this world of toil and snares, if I  
 3 When my fee - ble life is o'er, time for

Je - sus, is my plea, dai - ly walk - ing close to  
 keep me from all wrong; I'll be sat - is - fied as  
 fal - ter, Lord, who cares? Who with me my bur - den  
 me will be no more; guide me gent - ly, safe - ly

thee: let it be, dear Lord, let it be.  
 long as I walk, let me walk close to thee. *Ref.*  
 shares? None but thee, dear Lord, none but thee. *Ref.*  
 o'er to thy shore, dear Lord, to thy shore. *Ref.*