



Christ Church, Rawdon

*Located in the traditional territories of
the Haudenosaunee and the Huron-Wendat people.*

Palm Sunday Eucharist, April 10th @ 10:00

Good Friday Procession beginning @ 09:30 at Christ Church

Good Friday Eucharist, April 15th @ 14:00

Great Feast of Easter, April 17th @ 10:00

Worship services will be held in Christ Church as scheduled above, and barring technical difficulties, will be live-streamed on <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/789373873?pwd=cG94T3Z2MHOwTkRwZTJhVWRpL0kwZz09> and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/pg/christchurchrawdon/posts/. You can also hear the audio by telephone at 438 809-7799 (when prompted, enter the meeting ID: 789 373 873).

We are finally able to worship at FULL CAPACITY with masks on throughout our services

To my dearly loved sisters and brothers of Christ Church Rawdon;

I write to you during the 4th week of Lent with eyes looking ahead to Passion Week, Good Friday, and Easter.

Lent is a time to prepare heart, mind, and body for Passion Week and for the promise of new and renewed life which comes to all who gather at the empty tomb on Easter. If you have not yet done so this Lent, please set aside time in prayer to give thanks, to acknowledge error, to recognize hurt which you have caused, and to remember in your heart those relationships which need reconciliation, and those you need to forgive and ask forgiveness of.

Easter, as our liturgy rightly states, is our Passover Feast. It is our time to recall the Exodus of Israel from bondage in Egypt where the children of Israel had only minutes to flee their homes and follow Moses through the Sinai for 40 years where they were remade as the People of God, and eventually, but without Moses, across the Jordan and into the land of milk and honey. This history is part of our heritage. Our second Exodus is from bondage of sin into renewed life in Christ, whose passion and resurrection we take as the model for our lives – forgiving all that needs to be forgiven, granting grace which is our great responsibility, nourishing faith through love, and working to heal the world around us through acts of courage, patience, and prayer.

When we think of the Exodus, we must remember that the Israelites left in such haste that the bread was baked before the yeast had begun its work. By Rabbinic tradition the time from the addition of water to the beginning of yeast working on the flour is a maximum of 18 minutes. 18 minutes. That is the time that the entire community of Israel had to gather themselves and to flee. 18 minutes. They left with nothing other than their belief in God, their animals on hoof, a bundle of clothes, a skin of water, unleavened bread, and other small items that could be gathered in haste. Everything else was left behind. When we look at Ukraine, where 10,000,000 from a country of 44,000,000 have fled their homes, we see reflections of the flight from Egypt: very little time to gather things in advance of a hasty departure into the unknown. Were we in Ukraine and had only 18 minutes to flee, what would we bring? A mobile phone and a charger? Water? Some canned goods? Cheese and dried sausage? A few changes of clothes? A drawing made by a child? A photo album? We are blessed to live in a place where we are not at risk of being given 18 minutes to flee – blessed, but as is often the case, such blessing can lead to complacency and a desire to hold onto more than we should hold on to; or, to seek the preservation of our individual wealth rather than seek to ‘store up treasure in heaven’ where there is neither sorrow nor sighing, but life everlasting. If we had only 18 minutes to gather what we valued most, what would we bring, and what would we be able to leave behind?

The gospel reading for the 4th Sunday of Lent is the parable of the Prodigal Son. It's a parable which we know well; or, which we believe we know well. A father has two sons. He intends to split his farm and his wealth between them when he dies. One asks for an early inheritance, sells all that his father gave him, and throws it away through reckless living. The other only ever remains on the farm to tend to what remained after the prodigal son was given his share. When the son who wasted his inheritance returns, the father greets him with joy, for he had feared that he would never see him again. This stirs anger, jealousy, and resentment in the heart of the son who had remained. The father lovingly responds to the son who remained and reminds him that ALL that he has is his, but that he must give thanks for the return of his brother, for he has finally found his way home. The challenges which this gospel offers us are many: where have we been the prodigal who needs to return, ask for forgiveness, and reconcile with friend, family, community, and God? Where have we been the resentful and jealous one who worked hard and managed what is expected to be his inheritance, and is yet resentful of the feast prepared for the prodigal? Where have we been afraid that things which we believe are our right or over which we have a claim might be taken away and given to a sister or a brother or a neighbour or a stranger who, in our eyes, does not deserve what we claim as our own? I have been told several times by parishioners in different parishes who till land which has been in their family for generations that the gospel should celebrate the son who never left, for he is the faithful son, and that the gospel needs to be preached in that way. With an open heart I hear this point of view, for the son who stayed was indeed faithful while the other lost his way. What we need to do is both see the majesty of the prodigal's return as the unexpected joy that it is; and we need to grieve for the ever-faithful son who felt unseen, unheard, and insufficiently loved, for he has developed resentment and anger for his brother and his father – and is unable to either respond with grace to his brother or to receive grace from his father.

This Easter, which person are we as we dash out the door with fewer than 18 minutes to prepare for our journey? Are we the prodigal who sees the truth and in humility returns and confesses? Are we the faithful one who has all that the father gave him, but who grew resentful and allowed his heart to harden – who needs to learn to see the grace which he has been given and which he is called to give? Are we the father who easily gives away half of his wealth knowing that it will be wasted, and then mourns and worries – and ever looks for the unlikely return of his profligate child? Are we the father who has compassion on his resentful son who has everything? Or are we a witness who sees all of this from a distance and is grieved for the father who gives all away and has his heart broken by the first at his departure, and by the second at the voicing of his resentment and his blindness to the majesty of the grace that has always been his? As we gather on Good Friday, let us find our way to confess both as prodigal and as resentful people, and let us see the injury which we inflict when we cannot see the light of grace shining between the cracks caused by our own resentment, jealousy, and anger. Let us stand as a community at the empty tomb to voice assured confidence that there is grace enough for all needs if only we have courage both to give grace to each other and to accept the grace which was poured out for us.

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Enclosed is an Easter Offering envelope. Please bring the envelope with you to Christ Church when you join us to worship. If you are unable to join us, please mail the envelope to us at the address below. To become a regular donor we recommend you sign-up for monthly donations at <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/70387> When you type in this URL you will land at the giving page for Christ Church Rawdon at CanadaHelps.Org

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