



Sunday April 25th, 2021
Fourth Sunday of Easter
The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Gathering & Lighting the Candle

Acts 4:11 This Jesus is 'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.'

Set a large stone on the table near the candle. Have some smaller stones for people to pick up during the prayer. You may want to have a world map on the table for the Prayers of the People.



Light the candle,
 Jesus, the Good Shepherd,
 the cornerstone of our faith
 is the light in the darkness.

Call to worship

Good Shepherd, gather us in,
 not to be an exclusive, comfortable flock,
but to be a courageous congregation
offering sanctuary and welcome.

Cornerstone of our faith, gather us in,
 not to lock us into a rigid framework
but to shape us into your self-giving likeness
as we build our lives on you.

Source, Son and Spirit,
 be present with us in this time,
guide our hearts, open our minds
fill us with your peace. Amen.

Acknowledging

As we gather in this place, we acknowledge that the ground beneath our feet, and the air and water around us is sacred. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this sacred place and pay respects to elders past, present and emerging. We commit ourselves to walking together in justice and in truth.



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
 Christian Congress*

Singing - Alleluia, Alleluia TiS 390

(begins with refrain:)

*Alleluia, Alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord,
 Alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his name.*

Jesus is Lord of all the earth;
 the living Word of creation. *refrain*

Spread the good news o'er all the earth;
 Jesus has died and is risen. *refrain*

We have been crucified with Christ,
 now we shall live forever. *refrain*

God has proclaimed this gracious gift:
 new life for all! Alleluia! *refrain*

Come, let us praise the living God,
 joyfully sing to our saviour. *refrain.*

Words: Donald E Fishel 1950 - alt. Music: Don Fishel arr. Betty Pulkingham 1928- Used with permission CCLI 206 729

Listening

Read: John 10:11-18



Prayer

This prayer begins with the 23rd psalm and then moves from the image of 'shepherd' to the image of 'cornerstone' - allow enough time to make the transition. Invite people to pick up a stone during the silence.

Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;
 he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
 I fear no evil;
**for you are with me; your rod and your staff--
 they comfort me.**

You prepare a table before me
 in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

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Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
**and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
my whole life long.**

Good Shepherd who leads us in right paths,
we confess that so often we wander off,
we stop following your lead,
we forget the sound of your voice.

**For the times when we have gone astray,
in our own lives of faith
and as your people, the church,
Forgive us, lead us back**

(time of quiet, pick up a stone)

Cornerstone of our faith, the very first stone,
the rock, the building block of our lives,
we confess that we have rejected you
in so many ways:
by what we have done and failed to do,
by what we have spoken and failed to speak
and by how we have failed to trust you
and to build our lives on your love.

**For the times when we have rejected you,
in our own lives of faith
and as your people, the church
Forgive us, be our cornerstone**

*(time of quiet - you may want to
replace the stones near the candle
or place them near a cross)*

Followers of the risen Christ, know this;
that the building block that was rejected
became the cornerstone of a new world.

Be assured, we are known and loved,
we belong in this new world and we are forgiven,
Thanks be to God, Amen.

*You might want to listen to a great 70's Christian
rock song - it's an easy one to join in!*

Noel Paul Stookey's song *The Building Block* -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTr-PzfseeY>

Listening

Read: Acts 4: 5-12

1 John 3:16-24

For these words of faith
and for Jesus the Word: **Thanks be to God.**

Reflecting - Rev. Sandra Houghton

There is an old Chinese proverb that tells the
story of a fox that was captured by a tiger.

The tiger was going to eat the fox, but was
startled when the fox said, "You can't eat me!"

The tiger retorted, "Of course I can eat you!"

"No, you can't," the fox replied. "You can't eat
me because the gods have made me the leader of
all the animals."

Now the tiger didn't believe the fox, but the fox
offered to demonstrate his leadership by saying,
"Follow me and see if any animal challenges me.
If any animal challenges me, then you can eat
me."

The tiger was intrigued but disbelieving, but
agreed to do as the fox suggested. They set off
through the forest, with the tiger directly behind
the fox.

To the tiger's amazement it turned out to be
exactly as the fox had said. Not a single animal
challenged the fox. Indeed, every animal they
met fled in sheer panic. The tiger conceded that
the fox was the leader of all the animals and let
him go.

The proverb teaches us that it is easy to be brave
when we have a tiger behind us.

In today's story from The Book of Acts, Peter acts
as if he has a tiger standing behind him. He is full
of courage, with a heart on fire with God's love,
as he heals the beggar and then preaches to the
astonished crowd. Even after he is arrested,
thrown into jail overnight and then brought
before the council of the Scribes and Jewish
leaders for questioning, he proclaims his
determination to continue to preach Jesus Christ,

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crucified and risen and at work in the world healing and saving people.

Anyone who had seen Peter back in those awful sad hours when Jesus was on trial for his life in this very same place would have been astonished at the change in him. Back then, on Easter Thursday, Peter had been a frightened man who had strenuously denied even knowing Jesus. Now he has changed completely. He not only acknowledges knowing Jesus, but goes on to proclaim that it is through faith in Jesus Christ that he has been able to heal the lame man.

Some of Peter's courage may have come from knowing that the crowd was on his side, but he knew very well that crowds can be fickle. But we can be confident that the big change in Peter has come about because he has witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ and has been filled with the power of God's Holy Spirit. He is no longer functioning just in his own strength, for he now has God's strength and guidance to give him courage and the right words to proclaim.

He knows the truth that is proclaimed in 1 John 3:23-24, "And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us."

It is this indwelling of God's Holy Spirit that has so remarkably changed Peter and the other disciples. It is not like an insurance policy that protects against suffering, but rather it is the very real promise of God's love, presence, comfort and guidance always. Peter discovered, as can we, that there is no place that we can go, and there is no experience that we can enter into, that Jesus does not go there with us. This is God's promise to us. Now and always. Amen.

Responding:

Prayers for World & Community

1 John 3:17 How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

God of unbounded love,
we have access to the world's goods,
more than most.

We bring to you in prayer,
places and people in need,
those deep in our hearts,
those we hear about in the news
and those known only to you,

Invite people to place a stone on the map and pray for a situation and for the people in that particular location.

Cornerstone of our lives, risen Jesus,
who breathes the Spirit on us
and sends us out into the world,
let that same Spirit rest on the people and places
that we have named in prayer today.
as we pray together
the prayer that you taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

Passing the peace

May the peace of the risen Christ dwell with you:
and also with you.

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Offering

1 John 3:18 Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

God of unbounded love,
we have access to the world's goods,
more than most.
We ask you to bless our offerings,
that through them, we might find a way
to love in truth and action and to offer help,
hope and healing in your name, Amen.

Notices

What extra can you share this week?
Can you offer an hour of your time to someone
who is lonely - a coffee and chat, a walk around
the block, an invitation to lunch or dinner?

Singing - Holy Spirit, go before us TiS 420

can also be sung to the well known tune: AURELIA TiS 93

Holy Spirit, go before us,
every mind and heart prepare
for good news of life in Jesus,
for the joyful hope we share.
Gently lead the lost to safety,
gently teach them Wisdom's way,
till they come to seek you gladly,
till we find the words to say.

Holy Spirit, come and help us,
give us words to speak of Christ.
Teach us how to tell all people:
deepest darkness can be light!
Help us tell how faithful God is,
and how Jesus sets us free;
take our words and make them gospel,
so that many may believe.

Holy Spirit, stay to show us
how to serve as Christ served us.
May our words of love be grounded
in love's actions, first and last.
Your good news is news of justice,
and the strong befriend the weak
in your service, till compassion
builds the peace the nations seek.

Words: Elizabeth J Smith 1956- Music: Hal H Hopson 1033-
TiS 420 Used with permission CCLI 206 729

Blessing

Cornerstone, building block of our lives,
where the walls of heaven and earth meet,
be our foundation stone,
our rock and our assurance.

Good Shepherd who loves us,
who knows our names and our needs
and walks the way before us; lead us on.

People of the living God,
go to share what you have
with those in need,
your words, your love, your imagination,
and may the Spirit of life
be your companion and your guide,
in the name of the risen Christ, Amen.

Contributors this week

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