

Coaldale Mennonite Church

2316 – 17 St., Coaldale, Alberta

***“Rooted in Jesus, Growing in Grace, Connected in
Community, Branching into the World”***

Keeping in Touch –April 1, 2021



Good Friday/Easter Sunday

- ✓ **We are open for Sunday morning services to in-person attendance to a maximum of 33 people in the sanctuary, as per government regulations. This amount includes those involved in the service. We are asking that if you have access to the live stream service to continue to watch from home, that way those who do not get the live stream, can come in-person. If you wish to attend in person, registration is mandatory. Please call the office by Thursday am. We will be watching the guidelines of AHS and the government as to when more people will be allowed in church.**
- ✓ **Good Friday Service - Friday, April 2nd at 10:30am.** We will be sharing communion during the service. If you are watching the livestream and wish to participate in communion, make sure you have the elements with you at home.
- ✓ **The Live Stream of the Easter Sunday Service will begin at 11am.** You will be able to find the Live Stream on **You Tube** and searching **Coaldale Mennonite Church**.
- ✓ **Sunday School –** We will not be having Sunday School on Zoom for this Sunday, April 4th and next Sunday, April 11th. Sunday School will resume on April 18th.

- ✓ **We will be having our time of sharing and announcements via Zoom at 10:30am.** To connect, use the Zoom invite below:

Topic: Announcements/Sharing

Time: Apr 4, 2021 10:30 AM Edmonton

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85735104092?pwd=Mzh3TUwrWlJYaE4rcHBjN2VRQUhZZz09>

Meeting ID: 857 3510 4092

Passcode: 854574

- ✓ **Men's Prayer time - Wednesdays at 8:30am at church.**
- ✓ **The Mennonite History Mini-Series, February – April 2021 at 7pm**
[Click here to join us](#)
 - ✓ David Toews and the Russian Immigration to Canada - Gary Friesen (April 8)
- ✓ **Givings for March 28, 2021: \$3827.47** Budget \$3727.47
World Day of Prayer \$100.00
 - **E-transfer** is available for your donations to the church. Password is **CMC**.

Leading us in Worship on Good Friday:

Communion: Gary Giesbrecht/Eric Giesbrecht

Music: Kelsey Janzen

Sound: Mike Marriott

Media: Elyse Janzen

Usher Team: Team 1

Leading us in Worship this Sunday:

Worship Leader: Nick Dyck

Music: Doris Janzen

Speaker: Gary Giesbrecht

Scripture Readings: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; John 20:1-18

Sermon Title: "Surprised by the Empty Tomb – Meeting Jesus!"

Sound: Mike Marriott

Media: Nic Groenheide

Usher Team: Team 2



PRAYER FOCUS



Pray for:

- † **The family of Elsie Duda** as Elsie passed away on Friday, March 26th. A Zoom service to honour Elsie's memory will be held on Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 1:00 pm MT. If you would like to participate, please send a note to firstunited@telus.net for the zoom link and details.
- † **David Giesbrecht** who is recuperating at home.
- † **Our students and teachers at Kate Andrews School.**
- † **Our seniors at the various lodges and those in their homes.**
- † **Rock Solid Refuge**

(If you would like to have a prayer request in this weekly update, please contact Jodi at cmchurch@telusplanet.net or 403-345-3363.)

Report on the Special Congregational Meeting held March 26, 2021.

Thanks to all that were able to attend the Special Congregational Meeting held last Friday, both in-person and by Zoom. Thank you also to those who took the opportunity to vote, either by Mail-in or Advance Ballot at the church office prior to the meeting. A good turnout at a meeting like this is a healthy sign of a vibrant and interested membership.

For those who were unable to attend, we sincerely missed you. I would like to provide a brief report on the Special Congregational Meeting.

Firstly, we wholeheartedly accepted and welcomed three new members into our congregation, Adam and Kathleen Janzen, and Linda Wiebe. They have always been more than eager to jump into the activities of our congregation, and we welcome their ongoing participation.

We extended the terms of our current Deacon Couples, Peter and Maxine Janzen, and Fred and Joan Willms, and thank them for their ongoing dedication and service to their ministry within our congregation. We invite others that would like to learn more about how they too can serve in this way. Your participation in the ministry of deaconship would be welcomed.

Our congregation has had "provisional" status with the Evangelical Mennonite Conference since 2019, in an effort to learn more, and become better acquainted with the conference. Our deliberations involving moving to a full and active membership in this Conference have generated much prayer, thought, and discussion. This process has been both a source of sadness, and also of great hope, and these deliberations represent a bold and courageous search for new meaning together.

At this meeting, we considered the Recommendation from Council and Ministerial that our congregation join the Evangelical Mennonite Conference as full, active members. After discussion, a closed ballot was held, which included the Mail-in and Advance votes cast prior to the meeting.

The Recommendation was accepted with a 78% majority.

This decision has been communicated to Layton Friesen, the acting CEO of the EMC, and through him, we have been enthusiastically welcomed. Over the next several weeks, we will communicate with you regularly regarding how this newfound relationship can and should develop.

Rob Wedel
Church Chairperson

Note from Pastor Gary

Embracing the Paschal Mystery – The journey of Spiritual Transformation

Covid-19 became a reality in Canada just over a year ago. We had a choice, either we could ignore the virus and the mandates, or we could choose to abide by the mandates as a way of fighting the virus. Either way there would be consequences. The church leadership chose to mitigate the virus and abide by the mandates that were given to us. This meant a lot of changes and these changes have been documented in the various reports by the council. As a matter of survival, we had to change. Although the vaccines give us a sign of hope, the climbing numbers of the virus and its variants limit us to the size of our gatherings etc. The big issue is that we do not know when the virus will die down or enough people have been vaccinated to create a “herd immunity.” We continue in this state of the unknown. In other terms, we could say we have been in a long “Good Friday.” I use the term “Good Friday” because there have been a lot of suffering and deaths related to Covid-19. As a secondary effect, many people have lost their jobs and small business and every sector of our community has been impacted negatively in one way or another. We are living in a time we could label as “Good Friday.”

While the church has been functioning in a Good Friday mode regarding the Covid-19 measures, we decided to end another Good Friday issue that has hung over our church for a long time. On March 26, 2021 we voted by 78% to join the Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC) on permanent basis. Currently we have two major realities that are impacting our church, and together we must face both. The question is this, is there a pattern in the Bible that can help us move through this time of uncertainty so we can thrive and come out stronger than before? I would like to look briefly at this journey from the perspective of the “Paschal Mystery.”

Ronald Rolheiser in his book *THE HOLY LONGING: THE SEARCH FOR A CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY*, devotes a whole chapter to the “Spirituality of the Paschal Mystery” (pp.141-166). “Christian spirituality does not apologize for the fact that, within it, the most central of all mysteries is the paschal one, the mystery of suffering, death, and transformation. In Christian spirituality, Christ is central and central to Christ, is his death and rising to new life so as to send us a new Spirit” (142). He goes on to illustrate this transformation in the last events in the life of Christ; His death (Good Friday), His resurrection (Easter Sunday), Forty Days after the resurrection, the Ascension and Pentecost (147). Please study the chart below.

Event	Biblical Account	Paschal mystery
Good Friday	Death of Christ	Loss of life-real death “name our deaths”
Easter Sunday	Resurrection of Christ	Reception of new life
Forty Days	The disciples were ambivalent adjusting from the old to the new life	A time of adjustment from the old to the new life
Ascension	Jesus blessed the disciples and gave the last instructions.	Letting go of the old and letting it bless you (the good and the bad) not cling to it
Pentecost	The disciples waited until the Spirit came and the church was born	The reception of the new spirit for the new life one is living.

Good Friday: In the life of Christ, Good Friday includes the events that led up to his death and burial. While his death was messy and unjust Christ saw this as completing his mission on earth. He gained victory over evil by giving up his life. In his death he made forgiveness possible, and we can enter into a new life with him. Without the death of Christ there is no resurrection. Resurrection is about a new form and way of life. It is different than resuscitation which means life is lived the way it was. This is where the Pascal Mystery also speaks of death in our own lives. The cross of Christ is where we die to those things that trip us up, these include habits and sins, and we confess our sins. It is also a place where we bring our suffering and pain (emotional and physical), recognizing that Jesus understands us and is with us in this pain and suffering. The suffering and pain is well documented in our Covid-19 experience. Regarding the experience of leaving the Mennonite Church Alberta, for some the pain goes deep, while others have been frustrated that it has taken so long to make this decision. The Pascal Mystery invites us to come to the cross and claim our deaths in both the losses of Covid-19 and the loss of our church the way it was before making this decision. **In reality, we** cannot move on to the empty tomb until we have allowed some deaths to take place.

The empty tomb and the reception of new life: We know that Christ rose again on the third day. And in the resurrection, he has a new body, it is like the old, but it is totally new. Just as Jesus rose to new life, in the Pascal Mystery we too gain new life as we have died to our deaths at the cross. This new life is based on the resurrection of Christ. Having made the decision to move forward with the EMC it is like receiving new life. Joining with a new denomination has never been done before. This is new territory, and it is like beginning a new journey. Regarding Covid-19, we do not know when the storm will be over and so we have not begun the new life yet. These two realities are at different stages, one has moved on to the new life in the resurrection and the other is still stuck at the cross as the suffering and measures continue. The Pascal Mystery does not stop here and invites us to look at the significance of the 40 days before Christ ascended to the Father.

The Forty Days: If one reads the gospel accounts of the forty days after the resurrection the disciples were ambivalent in understanding what this new life of Jesus was really about. Mary did not know it was Jesus until he called her by name. The disciples on the way to Emmaus did not know it was Jesus until he broke bread with them. The disciples were afraid of the Jews and were hiding behind closed doors and Jesus had to meet them by entering through the closed doors. Thomas

would not believe unless he could see the scars in his hands and side. There is this sense of vacillating between the new life of meeting Jesus and yet were not quite sure what this meant. As we move forward in our journey with the EMC, I am sure there will be times when we don't understand all that we have committed ourselves to. There will be times when we might want to go back to the way things were. There will also be times when we have blessed others and others have blessed us in these early stages. This is not unusual to vacillate between the "cross and the empty grave." Even though we have new life this is a time to grieve the loss from the perspective of having made this decision. The challenge of facing new life after Covid-19 is that it may seem easier to go back to way things were before this pandemic rather than embracing the new life.

The Ascension: After 40 days Jesus invited his disciples to meet him on a mountain. It is here that he commissioned his disciples and blessed them. There will be a time when we as a church will bless the past and realize that God has used both the good and the struggles to shape into who we have become. The blessing is also a time to let the past ascend to God in thanks. This is a critical step in moving forward, because to receive the Spirit of Pentecost it must be in connection with having blessed the past.

Pentecost: In reading the first chapters of Acts the disciples waited for the coming of the Spirit of God. This was special in so many ways, they were involved in birthing the church, and the Spirit filled the life they had already received in the resurrection. This does not mean it was easy for the early church, it meant that as they struggled and worked together, they also worked together with the Spirit of God in moving forward. Having blessed the past and let it ascend to God as a thank offering, we are now open to receive the spirit for the new life we have encountered at the empty tomb. We do not know what this new spirit will look, just as the disciples did not know what the new Spirit would look like. But when the Holy Spirit came, they knew that this was of God, and reflected Christ whom they had known. So, when we encounter this new spirit, we will know the direction we are to go, and go hand in hand with the Spirit of God.

Many years ago, in a counselling session a person asked me, how will I know that there will be healing in this journey. So, I introduced her to the Paschal Mystery using the symbols of a Cross, the Empty Tomb, the 40 days (I am not sure how I drew that), the Ascension as a mountain, and the new spirit as a dove. And sure enough, as we went through the counselling process this person was experiencing the transformation of the Paschal Mystery.

I hope that we can meet Jesus the suffering servant in our Tenebrae service, and on Easter Sunday meet Jesus as our risen Lord.

May the Lord Bless you this special weekend.

Gary Giesbrecht



To Contact the Church

Admin Assistant: Jodi Reed

Office Hours: 9am – 12noon Monday – Friday

Church Office: **403-345-3363** & **403-345-5255**

Lead Pastor, Gary Giesbrecht: **403-795-0350**

Pastor to Seniors, Lil Thompson: **403-331-0297**

Lay Pastor, Eric Giesbrecht: **403-345-3946**