

ESQUIMALT UNITED CHURCH ~ Sabbath Time Worship for use at Home, March-April 2020

Words of Welcome: Welcome to this time of worship. While we will be sharing it together at different times and in different ways and spaces, know that in this space we share our praise, our living and our commitment to be as the Christ to everyone. In this space divine love is truly with us. In this time the Christ comes to meet us. In our words and action Spirit is moving and showing divine love and peace in our world. This is sacred time, a time when we are invited to just come and be, allowing the cares, stresses and struggles of daily life to stop.

Invocation prayer: Loving presence, we come before you at this time to offer our thanks for all that you give us. As the seasons change from chilly winter nights to warm spring days, we are thankful that you abide with us through all change. In each season that comes and goes, even the seasons of our life, you remind us that something new springs forth. Come and be in our midst as we offer our words of love and praise, singing our songs of renewal with all creation.

Isaiah 40:27–31: Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the divine one, and my right is disregarded by my God”? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The divine one is everlasting, the Creator of the ends of the earth. They do not faint or grow weary; their understanding is unsearchable. They give power to the faint and strengthen the powerless. Even youth will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the divine one shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

My Name is Joy: God, you call out to me, and I feel your presence like the great swells of the sea. My soul swims in this sea of joy and delight, which flows and runs from you. And then I no longer simply feel joy, I am joy. For you, O God, lady joy and lady love, have transformed me into yourself. And now my new name is joy, and my new name is love, even though I love so little. For now I live by joy and love by love. ~ *By Marguerite Porete who is one of the most compelling figures in the galaxy of medieval mystics. We only know that she was a Beguine in the region of Hainau and that she insisted on teaching publicly. Her book, The Mirror of Simple Souls, was condemned in 1300 but she refused to be silenced. This book, lost for centuries, is now studied widely and with growing astonishment. Marguerite was burned at the stake in Paris on June 1, 1310, the first Beguine victim of the Paris inquisition.*

2 Corinthians 4:13-18: Just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture – “I believed, and so I spoke” – we also believe and so we speak, because we know that the one who raised Christ will raise us also, and will bring us with you into their presence. Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people may increase thanksgiving to the glory of divine love. So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look

not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

Prayers: Creator, some are sorrowful and grieving, some doubting and skeptical, some are checking in with family and neighbours, many are worried that loss of employment will remove what limited security they have, some are working to provide physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual care to others and all of us are in this present life together. Bless us all with generous courage, patience and kindness, so that we might live in health and fullness.

Holy light, ground of my being, healer of my soul, today as our planet is being swept by this new virus, I am grateful for all the healers and their support teams, for researchers and cleaners, for all working day and night to limit the spread of the virus and to care for those who have contracted it. Their courage and commitment are such an inspiration. Lend them your strength, keep them safe we pray. Encourage us to find ways to reach out and support one another, each following guidelines that will help us stay safe while doing what we can. I ask that you hold each of us so close that we know you are walking with us, lending us your strength and lighting our way with hope.

You lift us up to the heights, holy breath. On wings like eagles you enable us to soar with the possibilities of revolution and of transformation both within our own souls and within our world which needs so much care. And yet it is not the bright skies where we most often live. We are here with our feet on the ground – leaning into your presence with us as we try to walk without fainting: walk through the shadows of death and ill-health and addiction; walk through life changes: moves, births, aging, loss. We need your strength to not grow weary as we continue to hope for new life amidst old attitudes and injuries. We long to run and not grow faint as we challenge demeaning political tirades that seep into our own daily encounters; and as we work for your compassion and wholeness for all people, all creatures, and the very earth. Lift us up to the heights, holy one, so we may again catch a glimpse of the vast possibilities of your shalom; your peace, even as we pray for it here on earth by praying together.

A version of the Lord's Prayer ~ New Zealand: Eternal spirit, earth-maker, pain-bearer, life-giver, source of all that is and that shall be, father and mother of us all, loving god, in whom is heaven: The hallowing of your name echo through the universe! The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world! Your heavenly will be done by all created beings! Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, strengthen us. From trials too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and for ever.

Blessing: Siblings of the divine, even when we are scattered, we are not alone. Divine love is with us and connects us one to another even when we cannot see. Let us live with forgiveness and grace in these days, with compassion and love as we are one family throughout the world. May the love, light and companionship of Spirit sooth your soul and bring you peace.