



## SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER 16 May, 2021

The most beautiful thing  
we can experience  
is the mysterious.  
It is the source  
of all true art and science.

—Albert Einstein

### Opening Sentences—from the Corrymeela Community<sup>±</sup>

In the midst of hunger and war  
We celebrate the promise of plenty and peace.

In the midst of oppression and tyranny  
We celebrate the promise of service and freedom.

In the midst of doubt and despair  
We celebrate the promise of faith and hope.

In the midst of fear and betrayal  
We celebrate the promise of joy and loyalty.

In the midst of hatred and death  
We celebrate the promise of love and life.

In the midst of sin and decay  
We celebrate the promise of salvation and renewal.

In the midst of the ascended Jesus  
We celebrate the promise of the living Christ.

### Opening Prayer

Giver of vision and courage:  
you fill me with hope and dreams  
for a world that is safe, generous, kind, loving and peaceful.  
Help me not to despair at life's challenging realities.  
Keep me from giving up or becoming cynical but,  
with your Spirit before, behind and with me now,  
enable me to move toward life and love.  
Gift me with the ability to hear and respond in trust  
as I pray and beyond. Amen.

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<sup>±</sup> The Corrymeela Community was established in Northern Ireland in 1965 by Ray Davies who believed "if we Christians cannot speak the message of reconciliation, we have nothing to say." Corrymeela works alongside fractured communities, seeking to heal relationships and address relational, societal, structural and power inequalities.

## ENCOUNTERING THE LIVING WORD

### Scripture Reading—Acts 1:15–17, 21–26

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, "Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus—for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.

"So one of those who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when Jesus was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection."

### Reflection on the Word

Sabbath Poem, 2014: VIII.16

by Wendell Berry

The above-ground woods is confirmed,  
sustained, immeasurably is made,  
by the half or so of it that is underground.  
We must acknowledge first that it is dark,  
and we are blind by sight. This is the stratum  
known only by result, where the dead become  
alive, where the seed, abiding alone, dies  
into the commonwealth of the living. We see  
only by the light we bring, never to know  
the dark lives as they are lived  
in the dark. We mine out of this darkness,  
according to our light, facts as dry  
as bones. Can these facts live?

So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."

And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

May your Word live in us

***And bear much fruit to your glory.***

Psalm 1

*Psalms for Praying* by Nan Merrill

Blessed are those  
who walk hand in hand  
with goodness,  
who stand beside virtue,  
who sit in the seat of truth;  
For their delight is in the Spirit of Love,  
and in Love's heart  
they dwell day and night.  
They are like trees  
planted by streams of water,  
that yield fruit in due season,  
and their leaves flourish.  
In all that they do, they give life.

## RESPONDING WITH OUR LIVES



What helps you stay connected to the unseen Source of Life that “confirms, sustains and makes” the world?

When have you experienced the presence of this Source in your life? What might it encourage for your future?

Is there an invitation to delve deeper at this time?

### Prayers of the People

Dear God, creator of nature and humanity, of truth and beauty, we pray:

*Spirit of Life, come to us. Fill us with faith and move us to love.*

Hear our voices for they are the voices of the victims of all wars and violence among individuals and nations. We pray especially today for the people of Israel and Palestine.

*Spirit of Life, come to us. Fill us with faith and move us to love.*

May those who govern the nations of the world use their authority with wisdom, kindness and peacefulness. Awaken in them a longing for justice that demonstrates care for this earth and for the human community.

*Spirit of Life, come to us. Fill us with faith and move us to love.*

Rescue those who suffer poverty, injustice or oppression when they cry out. Open the ears of our hearts to hear and give us the fierce determination to respond in love.

*Spirit of Life, come to us. Fill us with faith and move us to love.*

Grant comfort, healing and release to those who suffer illness, distress or grief. Awaken in us limitless compassion and use us as agents of loving kindness. We pray for all governments, medical professionals and researchers as they search for ways to alleviate the suffering and bereavement which has come with the pandemic. In our helplessness help us to find simplicity and peace within ourselves and the strength to be true examples of your love.

*Spirit of Life, come to us. Fill us with faith and move us to love.*

In your love and compassion, hear the prayers of your people...

## Disciples' 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 forever. Amen.

## Blessing

I am not asking you to take them out of the world,  
but I ask you to protect them from evil.  
As you have sent me into the world,  
so I have sent them into the world.

—John 17:15, 18

Let us go to be apostles of the great love we have received  
for which the world yearns.  
Let us go in the love of God,  
the grace of Jesus Christ  
and the communion of the Spirit  
with and for us forever.