

staying connected with God, each other, and ourselves



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## An Easter Reflection

A number of years ago, I arrived at one of my favourite weekly yoga classes only to learn that the instructor was unable to be there. But the good news was that there was a student who had been in the class before ours who had agreed to fill in for this occasion.

I knew the student, and I realized that she had just finished her yoga instructor certification course. And I must admit that there was a certain amount of disappointment in my mind at the time, facing the reality that we were going to get the last-minute, inexperienced yogi to lead us. But I was there, so I stayed to suffer it out.

But to my surprise, she was much better than I expected. Yes, she was obviously feeling overwhelmed. (Who wouldn't be?) And there were moments of hesitation and occasions when one movement didn't quite flow from the one before. But overall, she got through it well, and so did we.

I hadn't had another class from this teacher until a month or so ago, when she showed up again in the same class, again as our substitute leader. Wow! What a transformation. She was in no way hesitant. The flow was steady. The pace was just right. The class was excellent. But the central difference from my previous experience was that she was herself. I could tell in the former class that she was trying to channel our teacher, to take on his pacing, to follow his routines, and even making an effort to carry out some of his humour. Now, however, she was her own person, doing what she wanted to do and giving us what she wanted to give in her own style.

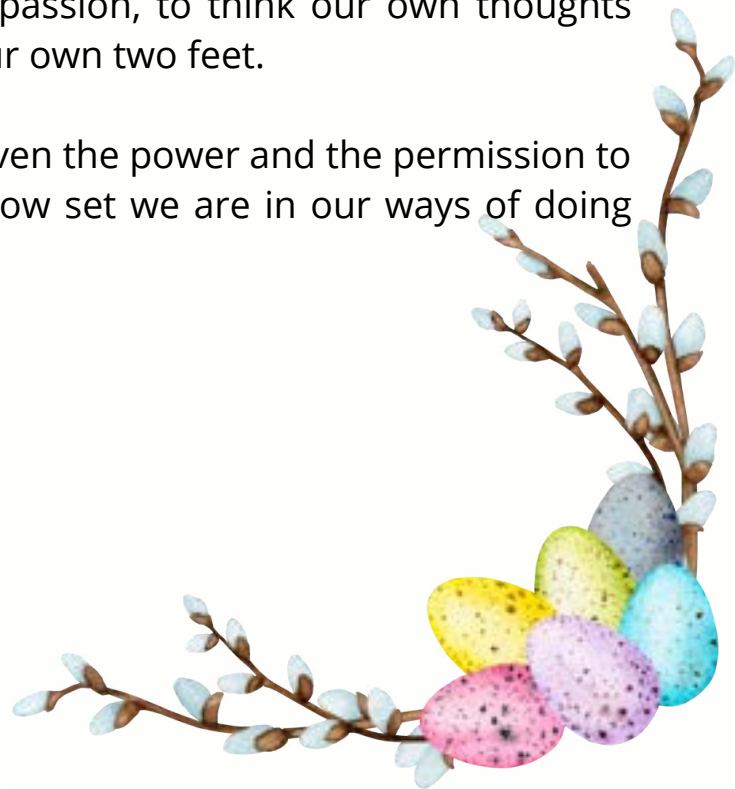


That is one of the keys to full living—being ourselves. And this is what Easter offers—new life that comes from the core of our being. Easter reminds us that we have been raised to a new level of life in which we can leave the old behind. We no longer need to follow traditions because someone told us to, to do things the way that someone else does them or to accept standards just because they are there. No. We are free to live from our hearts with passion, to think our own thoughts with conviction, and to stand in the world on our own two feet.

In the Spirit of the living Christ, we are at last given the power and the permission to be ourselves, no matter what age we are or how set we are in our ways of doing things.

Hallelujah!

Grant



# EASTER GREETINGS, DEAR FRIENDS!

Welcome to the Easter season! It's a wonderful place to be. Easter brings associations of joy, renewal, and rebirth—and who can feel downhearted in the face of those?

Unfortunately, some can and do feel downhearted. Life's challenges are always with us, and certain individuals may have every reason to have the blues despite longer daylight hours, spring hovering on the horizon, and the news that Christ did not die on the cross but is still alive and present among us.

If you have lost a loved one or are undergoing any major life-disrupting event, please accept our heartfelt sympathy. Anything our compassionate Congregational Care team can do to ease your situation we invite you reach out and request through the church office. And please take comfort in knowing that the capacity of human beings to experience glimmers of hope, even in the midst of grief, is a treasure often discovered as passing time and enduring faith works its miraculous healing.

For our readers of the magazine, whether online or in print, the CC team is delighted you continue to enjoy it.

After much prayerful thought, however, we have decided to produce only four issues per year from now on. With the height of COVID restrictions now over, circumstances have changed. Far fewer people are truly 'cut off' any more from church communication lines; visitation to shut-ins and those living alone has resumed. Our reasoning is also based on the conviction that some of the funding presently allotted to the magazine might be better redirected to the improvement of other congregational care efforts. Therefore, from now on, Church @ Home issues will correspond to the some of the principal seasons of the church calendar:

- Thanksgiving,
- Advent/Christmas,
- Lent, and
- Easter

Thank you for understanding. We look forward to continuing to provide you with reflective, informative, and enjoyable reading. And in that vein, we always welcome your submissions and ask you to please keep them coming! They should be sent directly to me at [f.porter@shaw.ca](mailto:f.porter@shaw.ca) So far, the number we have had is astounding and thrilling!

Happy Easter, all. Time for bunnies, painted eggs, chicks, and—above everything—wondrous news. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Fran



# EASTER PRAYER

## For Spiritual Revival

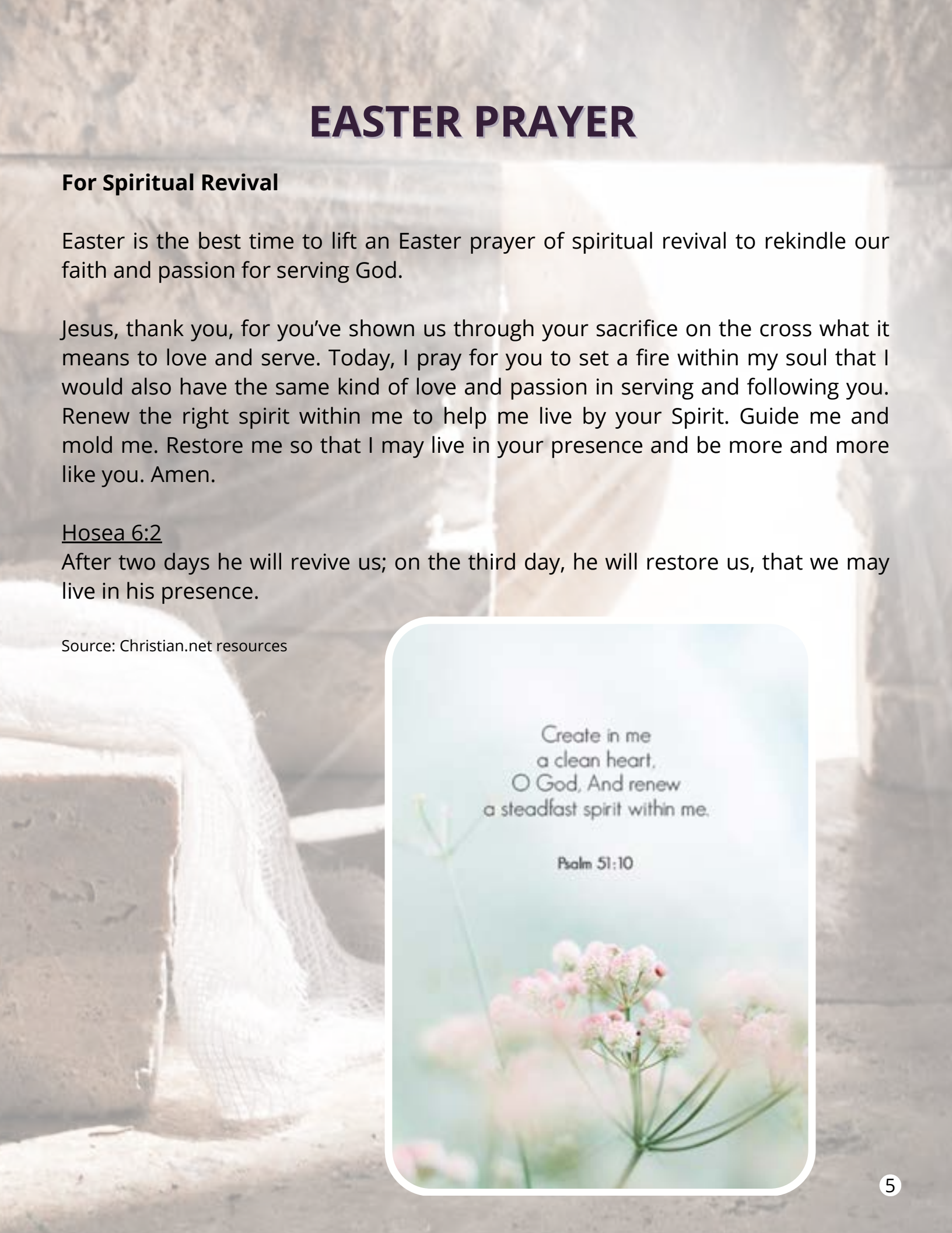
Easter is the best time to lift an Easter prayer of spiritual revival to rekindle our faith and passion for serving God.

Jesus, thank you, for you've shown us through your sacrifice on the cross what it means to love and serve. Today, I pray for you to set a fire within my soul that I would also have the same kind of love and passion in serving and following you. Renew the right spirit within me to help me live by your Spirit. Guide me and mold me. Restore me so that I may live in your presence and be more and more like you. Amen.

### Hosea 6:2

After two days he will revive us; on the third day, he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.

Source: Christian.net resources



Create in me  
a clean heart,  
O God, And renew  
a steadfast spirit within me.

Psalm 51:10

# EASTER POEM OF GRATEFULNESS

Easter is a season that stirs in us deep thankfulness for the renewal and rebirth it grants. This is a long but beautiful poem that speaks very eloquently about gratitude. Jackie, who submitted it, tells us it's from the gratefulness practice of embracing imperfections and, instead of judging them, noticing how they enrich our lives. The gratefulness practice invites us to set an intention to notice imperfections today that bring joy, evoke laughter, or bring reflection.

Hymn, with Birds and Cats  
By Francine Marie Tolf

I will praise my failures. I will praise  
What I have not accomplished and do not possess  
Because it has led to this moment  
At ten in the morning on a smoky October day,  
Sitting on the bedroom floor in my bathrobe,  
Treated to a rectangle of overcast sky,  
And a poplar whose yellow leaves,  
Half blown away, are as artfully arranged  
As the characters in a haiku.  
I will praise my too-small apartment  
With its cheap kitchen cabinets  
And mismatched furniture, its jumbo litter box  
Stealing half the front closet whose carpet  
Is covered with pebbles. I will praise  
The dun-colored carpet itself, gayer for wine stains,  
And my cardboard box of a desk.

Because I have sat cross-legged there,  
And felt ideas alight on my shoulder like cardinals.

And my home was a mansion then,  
A paradise of the new, which it is for the cats anyway,  
As they sleep under spider plants  
In rich strips of sun.

I will praise my body whose middle-aged belly  
Protrudes and whose knees have grown knobby,  
This foolish animal shape who guilelessly  
Stared back at me from the full-length mirror  
Of a doctor's office two days ago.

Because it is still rain- and sun-loving matter,  
The same that splashed lake water as a child,  
And rolled like a colt in June grass.

And I am never more satisfied than when I am  
Walking or pushing or lifting with it,  
Loving even the ache that follows,  
That assurance I am rooted with earth.

And I will praise my manila folders of failed  
And abandoned poems, poems that will never be  
Published or read by anyone except me.

Because not one was not perfect when first  
Budding, not one did not leave the fragrance  
Of possibility between these walls

Or deepen what decency I share  
With damp soil and oak trees and the geese  
Honking high above clouds just now,  
Esteemed messengers I can hear but not see

As I sit drinking coffee, amazed  
The ungainliness of my life should coalesce  
Into something so sleek, so elegant,

As this sudden happiness.

Source: [grateful.org](http://grateful.org)

Our thanks to Jackie Walters for this joy-evoking, laughter-producing, and reflection-bringing submission.

# EASTER AND NEW LIFE

Some visits bring delightful surprises. Marj DenHoed, head of our amazing Food Ministry Team that prepares the Care Packages for shut-ins and those living alone, had just such a visit recently when she paid a call on her long-time friend Darle, who lives on a nearby farm.

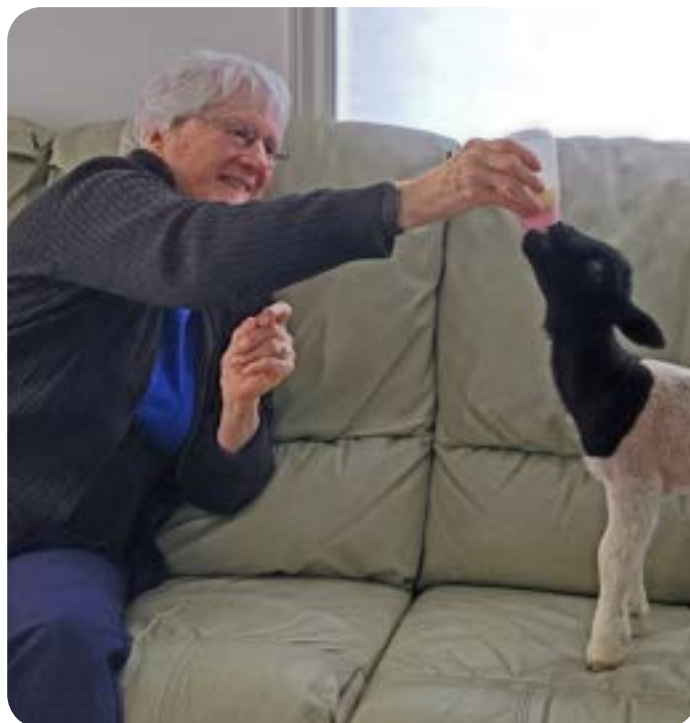
“It’s great to catch up each time I go there,” says Marj. “Whenever there’s a Care Package to deliver, I get a little nudge that reminds me it’s been a while since I last saw Darle. Our visits are lovely anyway, but this time there was a special treat awaiting me.”



When Marj arrived, she noticed that Darle’s dog’s bed held even more toys than usual. Darle explained that, temporarily, the bed didn’t belong to the dog—which had been relegated to a kennel on the property for the time being, so that a one-week-old orphan lamb Darle is fostering had a place to stay. The lamb—a little ewe—must be bottle fed every two hours. Darle will be looking after her for about four months.



“It’s just like having a colicky baby,” smiles Marj. “After Darle and I had been visiting for a while, the farm manager came in from the barn, bringing the lamb to have her lunch. What a cutie! She bounced around on all fours, was up on the couch with us, and made us laugh watching her play. She’s treated like a member of the household but hasn’t made it into Darle’s bed—yet.”



Once the bottle had been warmed up, Marj was thrilled to be able to help with the feeding as well as pet the new baby. “Despite being so young, she already has wool, but it’s in tiny little curls,” says Marj. “I wanted to share some pictures, which I hope everyone enjoys. This enchanting new life is surely a sign that spring is coming!”

Thank you so much, Marj, for enhancing our Easter mood with this great story and these adorable photos!



# MY JOURNEY BACK TO HEALTH

My name is Lori Loat and I am a congregant of RDLUC. Most of you may not know me, or if you do, you have rarely seen me in the past decade. But I feel compelled to share my story now, not so much to detail my mobility challenges over the years as to tell you how I've arrived at last at a good place on the other side of all my difficulties.

From 2017 to the present has been a rollercoaster of surgeries and recoveries, seven in all. A successful knee replacement in 2012 and two successful hip replacements in 2017 had me thinking my pain and mobility issues were over at last. So I went on a Mexican holiday to rest and relax in the warm weather. There, I had a very bad fall resulting in a triple fracture to my femur above the knee replacement. An excellent bilingual surgeon repaired the damage, but this injury put me into a wheelchair for six months while waiting for the bone to heal.

I lived alone in a two-storey Calgary home and needed temporary care, so I was transferred to Carewest. There, a wonderful team of doctors, nurses, and therapists gradually got me walking again. I learned the importance of exercising regularly in order to keep active. And I also learned the importance of having other great teams behind me: the RDLUC prayer ministry, the caring hugs ministry, the prayer shawl ministry, and the congregational care ministry in general.

Wilma Clark, an angel among us, was a bright light for me during this time. Her numerous visits and her kind and loving presence gave me much comfort, peace, and inspiration—as did a new hobby I started after receiving one in a Caring Hugs bag: adult colouring books. Care packages containing the Daily Bread booklet, the Church @ Home magazine, tasty food, a prayer shawl, an adorable stuffed lamb that I still keep by my bedside, and numerous other thoughtful little gifts packed by CC volunteers, were delivered to me by Wilma and were a delight to receive. I was also advised I'd been placed on the church prayer site and on the healing touch prayer list. My church was doing such a wonderful job of making me feel remembered and cared for!

But more challenges were yet to come. The femur repair site became septic with medically resistive 'super bug' bacteria. Another operation took place to flush out the infection, remove the metal from the femur, and insert into my upper arm an IV line dispensing strong and constant antibiotics throughout my body for six weeks. I was then placed on oral antibiotics and told this may be for my lifetime. Recovery began again. I stopped the antibiotics and resumed walking with the aid of crutches. However, the infection returned. It had moved to the knee joint, necessitating removal of the knee replacement and insertion of an antibiotic spacer into the empty joint. The IV procedure began all over again, and this time it sent me back into a wheelchair and back to Carewest.

I am forever grateful that my medical care team never gave up on me. And the support from my faith, my God, and my church has been unflagging. My final operation, giving me a new knee replacement and an interior prosthetic for my femur, has taken place. I am recovering once more and am infection free. Thank you, thank you, thank you, to the doctors, nurses, friends, family, and church family, for continuing to be in my corner. I owe you my life!

Our thanks to Lori for this inspiring story, and to Wilma Clark for convincing her it needed to be told.



# FEATURING OUR GREATEST STRENGTH — OUR RDLUC PEOPLE

This series of monthly articles will profile—with their permission, of course—one of the individuals, couples, or families that make our church the unique and special place it is. Who is ‘important’ enough to be featured here? Everyone! This month, we get to know **Doug and Michelle DenHoed**.

Doug and Michelle are a fixture around RDLUC and have been so from the time they were small children. Says Michelle, “My parents were looking for a place where my brother and I could be baptized. They tried a few churches and ended up at RDLUC in 1976. We were baptized in the old chapel, and the rest is history. I’ve never left.” As for Doug, he began attending when his family moved to Bragg Creek in 1975 because our church was much closer than their previous church. “Doug and I were Sunday School mates as kids,” remembers Michelle. “And we were taught by our moms.”



Church was special to both from the start. Doug, who describes himself as a ‘roots’ kind of guy, has always loved its scenic location, with the nearby mountains and the neighbouring elementary school he used to attend. “Going to church has evoked so many layers of special memories over the years,” he smiles. One of those, of course, was their own wedding. Yes, Michelle and Doug met at RDLUC, eventually married here, and have since raised a lovely family of their own in the RDLUC tradition! “Family is what it’s all about,” claims Michelle, “and church has always meant family to us—our own families and our church family. Amid those families, I’ve learned how to be a better person, how to challenge my understanding of the world around me, and how to help make a difference to others.”

Indeed, they have made a mighty difference to so many, especially within the church they call their own. From Sunday School, they both graduated to RDLUC youth group and to the more central Foothills Youth Group. As a teen, Michelle cut the christening ribbon when the church was moved to its new location once the original highway was widened. She helped lay the tiles you walk over as you enter the front door. Following in her dear mom's footsteps, she taught and coordinated Sunday school. She has served on the board, served as treasurer, served on search teams for new ministers, and served on the worship team for many years. Presently, she is our chair of finance. "Church means so much to me," she admits. "I really want to see our church continue to grow and adapt to the world changes around us."

Doug describes his contributions this way: "I remember the story of a young man employed by a restaurant who starts in the kitchen peeling potatoes, gradually tries every position, and ends up running the place. That's a nice parallel to my church career. I seem to have done it all: volunteering at dozens of activities and special events, being Sunday School student, then youth leader, then teacher, singing in the choir for twenty-plus years, being member then leader of the Men's Group, being member and minister liaison to the Ministry and Personnel team, serving on the board many times in multiple capacities, being acting board chair at present—and, most recently, helping create the 'Shared Ministry Team' opportunity between RDLUC, McDougall and Ogden United Churches. It's my way of paying back the debt I owe my church family for helping shape in me a deep sense of belonging and gratitude."

What an amazing pair! Doug and Michelle, we marvel at your commitment, your devotion, and your boundless generosity with your time and talents in our church's behalf. Heartfelt thanks to you both from all of us in that church family you so treasure!

Our thanks to Fran Porter for this submission



# NEWS FROM OUR YOUTH MINISTRY

## What's in a Name

Our Sunday School has a new name. We are now called the Youth and Kids collective (YK Collective). We are working to make our YK Collective a place where there are no pre-identified separations, which is why we have adopted a 'one room schoolhouse' style setting, grouping kids from ages 5 to 16 together each Sunday. We have found great success in this model. Our children and youth enjoy engaging with each other, and appreciate the unique skills and gifts each age level brings to the work each Sunday.

Over the last year, leaders Lori and Shelby and have been building the concept of community and stewardship with the children. Our vision and mission currently are to build stronger connections to our community. We look forward to continuing connecting with you through our different upcoming projects and through our YK Collective Newsletter.

## The Art of a Letter

As we rang in the New year, we started new projects in our YK Collective meetings. One of the things we are exploring, is what it means to be part of our congregation, and how we can create positive relationships in order to build bonds and learn more about each other. A major project that we have started is our Collective Kindness Mail.

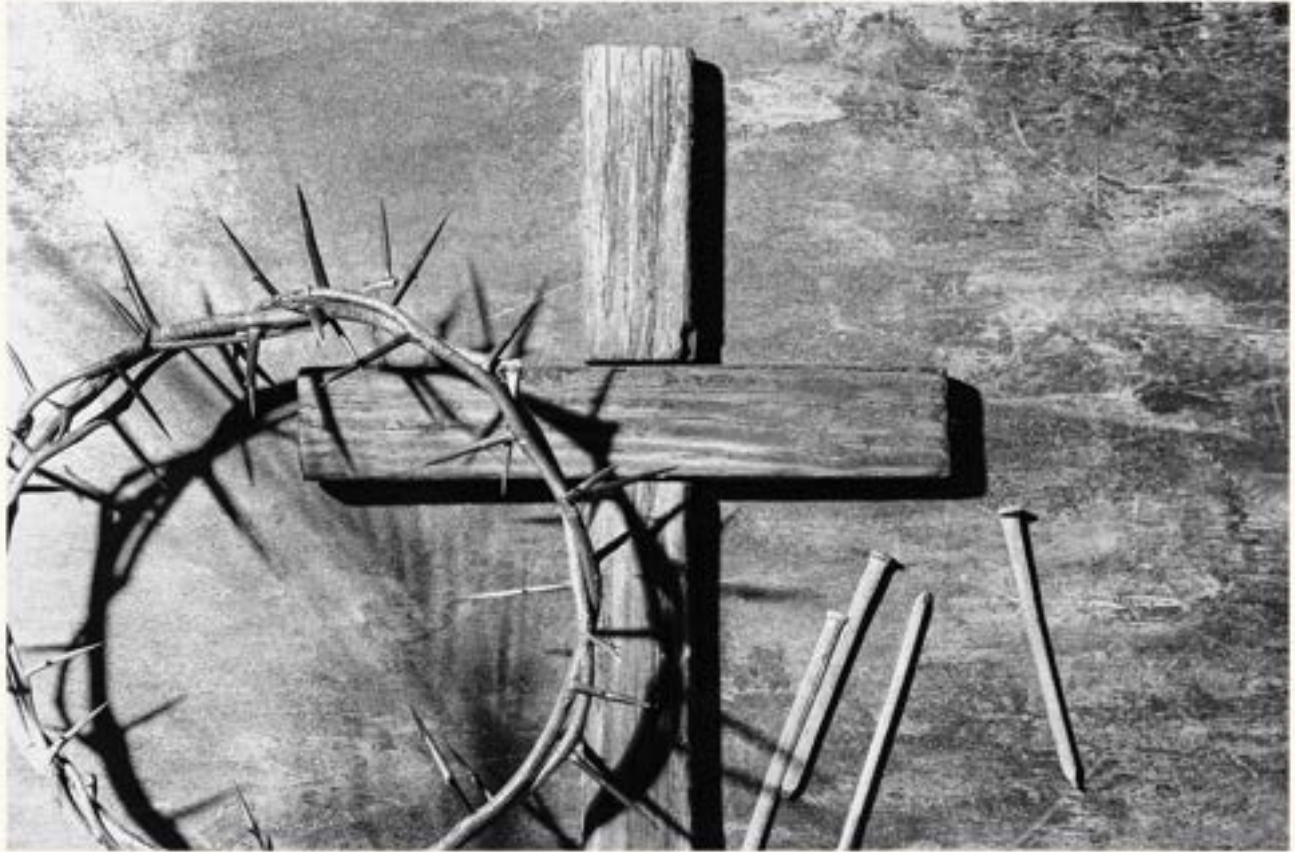
Several members of our congregation wrote the YK Collective a letter, and we have now established a 'pen pal' relationship with many members of our congregation. This is a wonderful connection where both congregation members and our collective are learning more about each other and forging strong bonds. If you would like to participate, you can drop off your letter at the church in our mail basket at the front entrance, or you can email your letter to us at [rdluckidsministry@gmail.com](mailto:rdluckidsministry@gmail.com) You can even snail-mail us at the address below.

RDLUC YK Collective  
96187 Spruce Meadows Green  
Calgary, AB  
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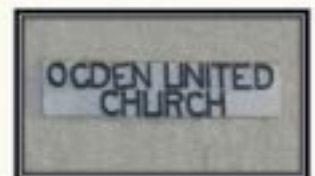
Thank you, Lori and Shelby for this submission and for your great work with the kids!



# Good Friday Service



**Join us on  
Friday, March 29 at 11 am  
for a shared  
Good Friday Service  
held at Red Deer Lake UC.**



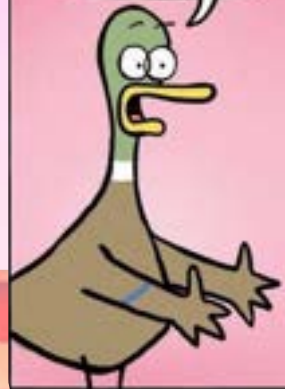
# YOUR EASTER SMILE

"My goodness, Roberta, they're just adorable ... And what precious Easter outfits!"



364 DAYS OF THE YEAR

WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?!? WE DO NOT EAT THINGS WE FIND ON THE GROUND!



EASTER

C'MON KIDS! LET'S GO OUT AND SEARCH IN THE DIRT FOR CANDY A STRANGER LEFT FOR YOU!



SOME PEOPLE THINK WE'RE A DISTRACTION, BUT HOW CAN A HANDFUL OF JELLYBEANS AND COLORED EGGS COMPETE WITH THAT?!



YOU'RE NOT REALLY GOING OUT DRESSED LIKE THAT, ARE YOU?



I SWEAR, IT'S LIKE YOU GUYS WANT TO BE FOUND.







# WE ARE RED DEER LAKE UNITED CHURCH



We are an inclusive and affirming community of faith – people of all ages, perspectives, and stories, who gather to connect with God, each other, and ourselves, and find in Jesus a new way of being human and alive in the world.

**you're welcome, wanted,  
and accepted. join us on  
the journey.**

## **Red Deer Lake United Church**

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### **custodian**

Andy Trimble-Menu

### **CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:**

Monday - Thursday

9am - 3pm