

**Summerland United Church**  
**April 21**  
**Fourth Sunday in Easter**  
**Resurrection Stories: Found**

**Threshold** Have you ever experienced homesickness? The longing and ache for something familiar when you find yourself in unfamiliar circumstances? We can feel 'homeless' even when we are at home if we lack a feeling of belonging, or feel displaced. Homesickness, psychologists say, stems from our instinctive need for love, protection and security -- feelings and qualities usually associated with home. And for many, Church can be and is a second home, when our church homes are disrupted, a feeling of homesickness can occur. So, how can we find, and offer each other, "home" with the assurance of the presence of God and a beloved community?

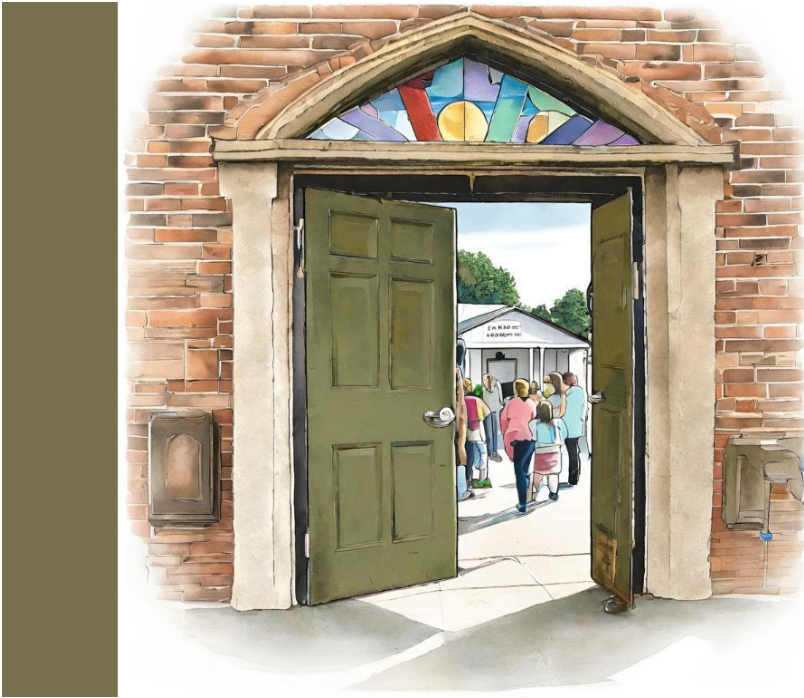
**Scripture:** Whether you take what is written in the bible as fact, myth metaphor or story, listen for the meaning they hold for you on this day. A reading from the book of John 14:18-28 (NRSV)

<sup>18</sup> "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. <sup>19</sup> In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup> They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me, and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." <sup>22</sup> Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?" <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. <sup>24</sup> Whoever does not love me does not keep my words, and the word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me.

<sup>25</sup> "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. <sup>28</sup> You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I.

One: May God bless our understanding of these sacred words.

**All: Thanks be to God.**



**Reflection:** We use a program called Canva to create our PowerPoint each week. It comes with an abundance of photos and imagery available for use on any given subject. There is a lot of variety of images and most of the time we find human-created images and photos for our visuals. However, sometimes I'm looking for something specific – such as an old

open door with a key in the lock – and guess what not a lot of people have been wandering around taking photos of old doors with keys in the locks.

So, I've turned to the AI image generator as part of the Canva program. Now, I have concerns about the future of art and AI, but I'll not get into that here and AI-generated art doesn't do a great job at a lot of things – once you start looking closely at AI images you can start to notice oddities within the images.

However, as I was thinking about this passage today and thinking about an image to accompany my reflection the words that came to mind were community, church, friends, and open doors. I did some searching online, but didn't find what I was picturing in my head. So I wrote "Community through an open church door" into the Canva AI image generator and this is one of the images it came up with.

And, you know it's pretty close to what I imagined in my head. There's an open door, that looks a lot like a church door, and on the other side is a community of people. Now you don't want to look too closely at the people, because you'll start to see where AI fails, but what I really liked about this image and why I chose it was because the people look like they're moving towards another building, which also sort of looks like a church.

So not only do we have an image of a church community with an open door, we have a church community moving together from one building to another. Which is of course very fitting for us as we work towards selling our property and moving to another church.

I'm also very aware of how many new people we have here at our church. People who have come from other communities of faith for various different reasons. So they too have moved from one building to another and hopefully have found a sense of home here.

In the passage we read today, we hear Jesus talking about how soon he won't be with his disciples anymore. He's alluding to his death, of course which is going to happen shortly. The disciples, as they often are in John, very confused and have Jesus explain himself multiple times.

Everything is going to change. Everything that brings them a sense of love, protection and security is being ripped away from them. They are about to be extremely lost and to use terminology fitting to this theme – they're going to lose their sense of home. They will become homeless.

And while our situation is not as extreme as the disciples', I think we can relate to the feelings of homelessness and homesickness. We're entering a time of big transition and upheaval. Some of you have arrived here with us, not even having processed your own previous upheaval.

If homesickness is the instinctual need for love, protection and security, I can imagine that if we're not feeling homesick already, we will be soon. We get homesick because "there are things that we love," said Thurber. "It's the byproduct of the strength of our attachment. If there were nothing in the world we were attached to, then we wouldn't miss them when we're away."

Feeling homesick is not a bad thing. It's uncomfortable, yes. It is hard, yes. It means we care, but it doesn't mean it should stop us from moving forward in our lives.

What is helpful towards lessening homesickness is seeking the familiar within the new environment, and remaining engaged with the world around you, suggest some psychologists. For me, I take a great amount of comfort in this passage this week – Jesus saying – I will not leave you orphaned. You are not and never will be alone. "*On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.*" On the day of his death, Jesus is saying, I will be with my father – but I also remain with you and you with me. And I hear in that line – and you will remain with each other.

He goes on to say, *the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you.* So we will

also have this other gift to help us along the way. A strange and mysterious gift, yes, but a gift of comfort and peace all the same. And speaking of peace, he says, *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you* speaking the plural you – all of you together - this is a message for everyone together.

Which in and of itself is a comfort – because we are not alone when we have community. Jesus gives this message before the upheaval of his death, so they can be prepared and remember his words. So, I give this message now before our own upheaval so we can be prepared and remember his words.

psychologist Chris Thurber says, "It turns out, [homesickness is] the very thing that inoculates against a future bout of homesickness. By living through a difficult separation, your mind forces itself to cope." He's talking about homesickness in students leaving home for school.

I think, what we can do is take our stories of separation, of Jesus' death and new life – and live into them. We can know that endings always have beginnings. Our story doesn't end on Good Friday – doesn't end in homelessness. There is always an Easter morning.

This change we are living into can and will follow the same pattern because we are following the call of God for our community. And just like this image – we are a community we don't, won't and never travel alone. We will go through a period of loss, a time of being lost – but we know our stories to be true and we will always and forever be found.