

PARISH HOUSE

Newmarket Church of Christ



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UNEXPECTED LIFE

Nathan Pickard

It's the Sunday before resurrection Sunday. Our practice is such that this particular Sunday we arrive at the cross of Jesus. We do not host a Good Friday service so we have to use the Sunday before Easter to arrive at the cross. We cannot arrive at the empty tomb without first arriving at the cross.

Our readings and songs for worship will all be centered on the cross. Our prayers will focus on the brokenness of the world. On this particular Sunday, we're going to read John's story of Jesus going to the cross (John 18 & 19). In John's version, we encounter Pilate who moves back and forth from the courtyard facing an angry mob to inside the headquarters where Jesus is questioned.

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Wanted . . .

Parish House Minister

The Newmarket Church of Christ has intentionally lived with her neighbours for the past 15+ years. We are now looking for a Parish House minister who will (but not limited to):

- Build upon and strengthen the established ministries and friendships within the neighbourhood,
- Live with and for our neighbours
- Continue to help us live deeper into the mission of God

Those interested to apply and/or to seek more information, please contact newmarketcofc@gmail.com.

A full job description can be found at:
<https://www.newmarketchurchofchrist.ca/parish-house>

Orthodoxy & Worship

Orthodoxy is right belief/doctrine. Is there a relationship between orthodoxy and worship? Every worshipping community has a liturgy (an order of worship). What's the relationship between the two? Is there a relationship? I think there is. I think liturgy shapes one's orthodoxy and one's orthodoxy shapes one's liturgy. If this is true, it's safe to say that worship shapes our belief/doctrine, and therefore, it matters what happens in worship.

Let's take prayer in worship. Each Sunday we pray the Lord's Prayer. What does this prayer teach us about our beliefs and doctrines? How does this prayer form us to have the right beliefs? What does this prayer teach us about God?

Each Sunday in worship we ask (1) Who do we need to pray for, and (2) what are we grateful for? By forming our prayers around these two questions, what does this teach us? What kind of beliefs is this creating in us--beliefs about God and God's work in this world?

Worship shapes our orthodoxy. For those of us who have been tasked and called to think seriously about our worship, we would be wise to see the relationship between orthodoxy and worship.



Unexpected Life, Cont'd

My youngest has arrived at the church early with me. His responsibility is to turn on the projector, start the music, and make sure Kenny has the coffee made, which it always is. My son notices the communion has not yet been brought up so he goes down to the basement and starts bringing up the trays of communion. When he walks by me he simply says, "*The trees are starting to bud.*"

At first, I had no clue what he was talking about. I thought maybe he had seen some trees outside that were starting to bud, but that didn't make any sense because there is still snow on the ground and we haven't had the warm weather to bring out the spring buds. As I was thinking of what he meant, it dawned on me that the leftover poinsettias from Christmas (which were in fact poinsettia trees), were shoved into the back stairwell, waiting for spring when they could be tossed into the compost bin.

I walked into the back stairwell and sure enough, the poinsettia trees were starting to bud and flower. I couldn't believe it. These poinsettia trees have been without water for three months, little sunshine, the soil is dried out. No life should ever emerge, but life is starting to emerge.

I couldn't help but make the connection: it's the Sunday before Easter and we are arriving at the cross. The cross is death. The cross is Rome's way of saying that Jesus is a failed Messiah. The cross is abandonment. Remember what Jesus says, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" The cross is defeat.

But what the powers didn't know is that the cross did not lie across the road of salvation; the cross was the road of salvation that Jesus would walk. The cross would not end the in-breaking of God's kingdom, as Rome was hoping for. The cross enthrones Jesus as king and defeats death and evilness so that God's kingdom is established on earth as it is in heaven.

The events of Friday (the cross) lead us to Sunday (resurrection). When resurrection takes place, unexpected life emerged from the tomb. At first the eyewitnesses to Jesus resurrection were afraid and skeptical, but as they touched, ate and drank with Jesus, they discovered darkness and death were defeated.

I have looked at these poinsettia trees for the last three months. I've looked at the dried up soil, the lack of water, the stems that were drying up and withering away, and believed they were dead. But now there is life emerging.



How can this be? It's not suppose to happen! But then again, how can:

- Lepers that live on the margins suddenly be healed?
- The blind see?
- The dead be raised to life?
- The sinner be forgiven?

How can it be:

- A lifeless church suddenly has life
- The dying have hope
- An addict lives a life of sobriety
- A neighbourhood hears and responds to the gospel

How can it be? I will tell you how it can be. It happens because of the resurrection power at work in our midst. There was death but now there is life. There was darkness but now there is light. There was the old creation but now there is the new creation.

Easter is more than a bunny and some chocolate, it's about a power unleashed in this world to bring life into places of death.

Dwelling In The Word

We have been sharing a neighbourhood meal with our neighbours each month for many years. A few months ago, after everyone had gone home, a few of the regulars and longtime church members stuck around. We were reflecting on our experiences of sharing a meal together. In our reflections, we wondered if we had enough trust to dwell in the Word with our neighbours.

The next month, before our prayers of thanksgiving, we handed out a single sheet of paper with words from Paul's letter to the Roman church--words from Romans 8 . We invited everyone to listen to the Word of God and afterwards, to share what word, phrase or image caught their attention.

And were we surprised. Our neighbours kept telling us they were hearing and seeing God's love. After we prayed, only a few sheets of paper were left to be picked up. Our neighbours took home the Words of Scripture.

"To be most effective in bringing about change in a community or a neighborhood, it helps if you live there."

Larry James, *The Wealth of the poor*

**NEWMARKET
CHURCH OF
CHRIST**

Sharing the kingdom of
God through friendship
with the neighbourhood

230 DAVIS DR.
NEWMARKET, ON L3Y 2N4

905-895-6502
NEWMARKETCOFC@GMAIL.COM
WWW.NEWMARKETCHURCHOFCHRIST.CA