

MOUNT ROYAL EMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH

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April 27, 2025 ~ Holy Humour Sunday

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements & Joke #1

Land Acknowledgement

We gather with respect on this land which is Treaty 6 – the traditional lands of many Indigenous nations as well as the homeland of the Métis peoples.

We give gratitude for the laughter and sense of humour we enjoy with our Indigenous siblings.

We give thanks that despite the many hardships Turtle Island (Canada) has brought to the Indigenous, they have still shown us how to smile and be filled with joy.

Let us work towards a world where there will be more joy, celebration, harmony and freedom.

(Rev. Debz Ferber)

A Brief History of Holy Humour Sunday

Ever heard of *Laughter Sunday*?

The idea of setting aside one Sunday each year to celebrate God's gift of laughter and joy may be new to me, but it's got a long and rich history in many congregations around the world.

Laughter Sunday (also known as *Holy Humour Sunday*, *Hilarity Sunday*, *God's Laughter Sunday*, *Bright Sunday* or *Holy Fools Sunday*) has its roots in a number of different Christian traditions.

Churches in 15th century Bavaria used to celebrate the Sunday after Easter as *Risus Paschalis* ('God's Joke,' or 'the Easter laugh'). Priests would deliberately include amusing stories and jokes in their sermons in an attempt to make the faithful laugh. After the service, people would gather together to play practical jokes on one another and tell funny stories. It was their way of celebrating the resurrection of Christ – the supreme joke God played on Satan by raising Jesus from the dead.

The observance of *Risus Paschalis* was officially outlawed by Pope Clement X in the 17th century. Perhaps people were having too much fun.

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In the Orthodox tradition, people would gather on Easter Monday to tell jokes and funny stories, and to dance and eat together.

Other traditions celebrate *Laetare Sunday* (also known as ‘Mothering Sunday’) on the fourth Sunday in Lent. “Laetare” simply means ‘rejoice,’ and comes from the opening collect for that day: ‘*Rejoice with joy, you that have been in sorrow.*’ On this Sunday, the usual Lenten purple vestments and altar cloths are replaced by rose-coloured ones instead. Flowers (not normally present during Lent) are also brought into the sanctuary.

In 1988, the Fellowship of Merry Christians began encouraging churches to resurrect some of these Christian traditions—to celebrate the grace and mercy of God through the gift of laughter and joy.

G.K. Chesterton once wrote:

“Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly.

Never forget that the devil fell by force of gravity.

He who has the faith has the fun.”

(Source: Re:Worship)

Joke #2

Call to Worship

Joy is loose,

In the wiggles of the children,

The whispers of the youth,

The smiles of the adults.

We praise God for this glorious day,

Let the praise break forth

in the most unlikely places and in silly ways.

Joy and praise fills our hearts and in our songs

Let the laughter be deep,

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for we are God's people.

(Trinity United Parish)

Hymn: This is the Day #412 VU

Joke #3

Lighting of the Peace Candle

We light this candle remembering the One who said, "I am the light of the world."

Prayer for Peace

God of Fools, Lord of Clowns and Smiling Saints,

we rejoice in this playful prayer that you are a God of laughter and of tears.

Blessed are you, for you have rooted within us

the gifts of humour, lightheartedness, and mirth,

with jokes and comedy, you cause our hearts to sing

as laughter is made to flow out of us.

We are grateful that your Son, Jesus,

who was this world's master of wit,

daily invites us to be fools for your sake,

to embrace the madness of your prophets, holy people, and saints.

We delight in holy madness which becomes the very medicine

to heal the chaos of the cosmos

since it calls each of us out of the hum-drumness of daily life

into joy, adventure, and, most of all, into freedom.

We, who are so easily tempted to barter our freedom

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for tiny speckles of honour and power,
are filled with gratitude that your Son's very life has reminded us
to value only love, the communion with other persons and with you,
and to balance honour with humour.

With circus bands and organ grinders,
with fools, clowns, court-jesters, and comics,
with high-spirited angels and saints,
we too join the fun and foolishness of life,
so that your holy laughter may ring out to the edges of the universe.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, who invites us to be holy fools. Amen.

(Edward Hays: Pray All Ways)

Passing the Peace

Let us take a moment to look around the congregation.

We can offer a smile, a nod, or even a little chuckle to ourselves.

This mixed group of people, all joined together to delight in the joy of Easter and the laughter of the resurrection.

Let us greet one another with these words:

Peace be with you.

And also with you.

We share a sign of this peace.

Joke #4

Hymn: Never Ending Joy #40 MV

Opening Prayer

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O Great Laughing God,
we come into your presence with joy and longing to be surprised.

We thank you that you have given to us the gift of laughter and delight.
These things give hints as to the nature of your purpose for us
and for all the earth.

May we find that in giving up to laughter
there is healing and hope and abundance and blessing.
Tickle our souls with the brush of your Spirit
to renew our worship and our living. Amen.

(United Church of Canada, Bay of Quinte Conference)

Affirmation of Faith

We believe in God,
who made us in His image.

We live, we love, we laugh,
because we are like Him.

We believe in Jesus Christ,
the Son of God, our Lord and Savior.

He had the last laugh on the devil
when He rose from the dead.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
coequal and coeternal with the Father and the Son.

Our counselor, our guide, our motivator –
He is our joy!

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(First Christian Church – Disciples of Christ, of Conroe, Texas)

Hymn: This Joyful Eastertide #177 VU

Wonder Time

Hymn: It's the Song of Praise to the Maker #30 MV

Listening Prayer

Scripture: John 20:19-31

Joke #5

Choir Anthem

A Sermon in Two Parts

Offering

Offertory Hymn

What can I do?

What can I bring?

What can I say?

What can I sing?

I'll sing with joy.

I'll say a prayer.

I'll bring my love.

I'll do my share.

(What Can I Do? #191 MV)

Offertory Prayer

O God, your laughter echoes within all your Creation. May we join fully in your mirth as we dedicate our selves – along with these resources we give – joyfully giving in a world

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that thrives in relationships of love. Bless what we give as well as blessing who we are in our giving, that we may evermore be followers of the Way of Jesus. Amen.

(Kincardine United Church, Kincardine, ON)

Prayers of the People

God smiles, this much I know
for he created laughter
so that we might join in the enjoyment of his creative energy
those wonderful colour schemes of bird butterfly and flower.
The shapes and expressions on so many creatures and insects
These weren't created by a boring God
they were drawn and planned by a God with a sense of humour
and that's a comforting thought!

Creator God, we praise you for the diversity of your world
and for the life you have breathed into all things
for the colours we see
the sounds we hear
the textures we feel
for the large
and the small
the fierce
and the timid
predator
and prey

Creator God,
we thank you for your creation,
perfect in its design and purpose,
perfect in its diversity and unity.

(John Birch)

The Lord's Prayer

Response: Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying #400 VU

Commissioning

O God,

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on Easter the thunder of your voice
caused the stone to roll away from Christ's tomb.

**Make the ground shake beneath us,
so that our feet shall dance,
so that we shall leap up and run out the door,
and carry love to a waiting world.**

(Rev. Barbara L. Housley, Mountainhome United Methodist Church, Pennsylvania)

Blessing

Go in laughter; go in grace.

Keep the Lord in your heart

and a smile on your face.

Closing Hymn: You Shall Go Out with Joy #884 VU

