

Easter is the heart of the Christian story for Wilmot's Gaskin

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Wilmot United Church, on the corner of King and Carleton Streets in Fredericton's downtown, has been a part of the city's landscape for a century and a half.

During this decade, it has continued to thrive under the pastoral leadership of Rev. Rose-Hannah Gaskin.



For Gaskin this coming week, that means walking beside fellow congregation members in the Easter drama - an event that she described as "the heart of the Christian story."

As she put it, "If Christ had not been raised by God, we would not likely still be calling ourselves disciples and endeavouring to follow his life example and teachings. We might think of Jesus as another wise and important teacher from the first century, but nothing more.

"However, for Christians, Christ is much more than that. Something profound and life-changing happened after Jesus was killed and buried long ago. Something convinced the first disciples that Jesus continued to be with them in a powerful way.

"All he had taught them took on new and illuminating meaning; they saw the world and their lives in a radical new light. This conviction has been passed on to us as modern day disciples."

That reality defines Easter, in Gaskin's view.

"Easter is about a profound trust in God and the conviction that death does not have the final say. Because of this cornerstone of our faith, we are freed from worry and fear, to live life fully and deeply as the gift it is.

"True, death is an inevitable part of life, but it is not the final word."

Gaskin was born in New Brunswick and traveled throughout Canada and abroad as her father served in the Canadian Armed Forces. Her first career was nursing; she holds a Bachelor of Nursing degree from UNB and a Master of Science in Nursing from the University of Toronto.

In the 1990s, Gaskin discerned a call to ministry and she was ordained in 1998. She served in a broad variety of ministry settings prior to coming to Wilmot, including a five-point rural charge in Cape

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Breton, dying urban congregations in British Columbia, an ethnic congregation, a large urban cathedral-style church in Vancouver and a large inner-city mission in Vancouver's downtown east side.

She has also completed several intentional interim ministries and taught in the national training program Basic Skills in Transitional Ministry.

Gaskin sees Easter as a time that speaks to all, regardless of their background or their spiritual leanings.

"In an indirect and non-religious way, Easter speaks about hope in the face of all that is tragic and overwhelming.

"Perhaps such seeds of hope are deeply planted in our human psyche. I think of the various ancient and timeless themes of good triumphing over evil, light overcoming darkness, and even nature's themes of spring bringing new life out of winter's deathly cold.

"Such deeply grounded hope is essential for having a sense of meaning or purpose in life. The mythology, music, poetry and art of diverse cultures reflect this.

That said, the Easter reality is particularly resonant for the Christian.

In Gaskin's words, "For me as a Christian, Jesus is the human face of this hope.

"Through the gospel stories, the community of faith that is the church, the discipline of prayer and the grace of God, Easter sustains me and nurtures my faith throughout the year."

The Holy Week worship schedule at Wilmot United Church begins tomorrow with a Palm Sunday worship service at 11 a.m. They will join the congregation of St. Paul's United Church at a Maundy Thursday service at St. Paul's at 7 p.m. on April 21, and host a Good Friday service at Wilmot at 11 a.m. on April 22.

On April 24, an Easter Sunday sunrise service will be held with the people of with St. Paul's United at the riverside at the end of Carleton Street at 7 a.m. This will be followed by breakfast at Wilmot.

The main worship service for Easter at Wilmot will include communion at 11 a.m.

For additional information about these services in particular or Wilmot United Church in general, readers are encouraged to access the congregation's website: www.wilmotuc.nb.ca and follow the links.