

Worship Service: EASTER

Helpful Elements:

White table covering
Strip of white lace or linen to drape on cross
Easter lily
Choral recording of Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus"

Note: Because this service starts and ends with the song, "Christ the Lord is Risen Today," it can be helpful to include a copy of the lyrics at the beginning of the songbook *and* at the end. (Flipping to the back of the hymnal at the beginning of the service can be confusing for those with dementia.)

Welcome: Welcome and Happy Easter! Thank you for coming to our service today. My name is _____ and I'll be leading our worship time.

Today we celebrate the most holy day in the Christian church, the day when Christ resurrected from the dead. On Good Friday, three days ago, we remembered the sorrow Christ's crucifixion and death; and today, Easter Sunday, the stone has been rolled away and Jesus is alive. Our white table covering symbolizes new life, and the veil on the cross symbolizes the grave clothes that he left behind.

Christians all over the world are celebrating Easter today, and they often use a Call and Response for their Easter greeting. Let's try it:

Leader: Christ is risen!

Congregation: He is risen indeed!

[repeat pattern three times]

Let's begin by singing the classic Easter hymn, Christ the Lord is Risen Today. It's at the front of the hymn book, and we'll probably sing it again at the end of the service – because once a year just isn't enough 😊

Opening Hymn: Christ the Lord is Risen Today, p. 21

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of the Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.¹

Statement of Faith: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23 together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymns:

Amazing Grace, p. 4

Holy, Holy, Holy, p. 5

Jesus Loves Me, p. 6

We'll be reading through the story of Jesus' resurrection from the Gospel of John, chapter 20.

First Reading: John 20: 1-10

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. ²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." ³So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. ⁴Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵And stooping to look

¹ http://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Easter.htm

in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, ⁷and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples went back to their homes.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

This is My Father's World, p. 9

Second reading: John 20: 11-18

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. ¹²And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. ¹³They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." ¹⁴Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Standing on the Promises, p. 11

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing, p. 12

Third reading: John 20: 19-22

¹⁹On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." ²²And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Shall We Gather at the River, p. 13

I Need Thee Every Hour, p. 15

Fourth reading: John 20: 24-28

²⁴ Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Interactive Homily:

- Today, Easter Sunday, is the holiest day in the Christian year, because it remembers the resurrection of the Lord Jesus on the third day.
- What sorts of things "come to life" from something else? Think about a butterfly; how does it start out?
 - Butterflies from caterpillars and cocoons
 - Flowers from bulbs
 - Chicks from eggs
 - Oak trees from acorns
- Does a cocoon or a tulip bulb look alive? No; dried and empty-looking
- What kind of power does it take for those things to change into something beautiful? Do we humans have the power to make a seed grow or even to make a baby grow? No...
 - The power of life itself! God is so powerful that even death obeys him. When we talk about eternal life, that's what that means; our bodies may wither and die, but his promise is that we live with him forever, praising him.

- It looked like death had won; but the empty tomb showed God to be the most powerful of all.
- I wonder how Mary and the others felt when they went and saw the tomb empty? How would you feel?
 - scared! horrified! But in another account of the resurrection, the angel says “Fear not.” (Same words that the angel spoke to the shepherds at Jesus’ birth.)
- I wonder why the angels say this?
 - Because God is in control, no matter how things look.
- And what about “Doubting Thomas”? What was his feeling about the news of Jesus’ resurrection?
 - Wanted to see Jesus’ wounds before he would believe
 - Seeing becomes believing for him; but Jesus says we are even more blessed, because we have not physically seen but we believe.

Let us thank God for the miracle of life and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, by whose life we are given eternal life.

(Silent Prayer) Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us say the Lord’s prayer together:
Lord’s Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Hymns:

O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing, p. 16

My Jesus I Love Thee, p. 17

Reading: An Easter Prayer

We are often not the Easter People
 that we should be,
 living in the certain knowledge
 of your great mercy and love.
 Distracted by the world around us
 we fail to hear your voice,
 or hide when faith is challenged

as we wander off the path.
Forgive us, we pray;
restore the love that we first had,
a faith that can endure.
We will keep our eyes fixed on you, Lord,
and with you at our right hand
we shall not be shaken.²

Hymns:

The Old Rugged Cross, p. 18

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross, p. 19

Now receive our closing blessing on this glorious day.

Closing Blessing:³

Halleluia!

Christ is risen!

[response:] **He is risen indeed!**

How blessed is this day, when earth and heaven are joined and humankind is reconciled to God!

May the light of Jesus shine continually to drive away all darkness. May Christ, the Morning Star who knows no setting, find his light ever burning in our hearts—he who gives his light to all creation, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

Hymns (optional):

Christ the Lord is Risen Today, p. 21

Jesus Shall Reign, p. 22

Doxology (reprise), p. 23

[put on choral recording of “Hallelujah Chorus” while greeting people and collecting hymnals]

² http://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Easter.htm

³ adapted from the Book of Common Prayer -1979, the Protestant Episcopal Church