



Worship Service Theme: Easter

Helpful Elements:

- White table covering
- Strip of white lace or linen to drape on cross
- Easter lily and/or other spring decorations
- Large photo of cocoon and butterfly; seeds, pinecone, acorn, hard-cooked egg, and/or other “lifeless” things that turn into something alive
- Choral recording of Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus”

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 faith, 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 Jesus left behind in the tomb.

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: I will say “Christ is risen,” and you all respond, “Christ is risen indeed.”

Leader: Christ is risen!

Congregation: Christ is risen indeed!

[repeat pattern three times]

Please join me as we open our time in prayer:

Almighty God, who through your only 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

Let's begin by singing the Easter hymn, **Christ the Lord is Risen Today**, found at the very end of our songbook on page 29. We'll sing it again later, too—because once a year just isn't enough 😊 *[provide a little extra time to get to the page]*

Opening Hymn: Christ the Lord is Risen Today, p. 29

Statement of Faith, p. 2: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting “The Lord is My Shepherd” 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 shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymns:

We Gather Together, p. 3

Joyful, Joyful, p. 5

Jesus Loves Me, p. 6

First Reading: Today we'll be reading through the story of Jesus' resurrection from the Gospel of John (20).

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 Mary ran and went to Peter and [John], 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 [John], and they were going toward the tomb. ⁴Both of them were running together, but [John] outran Peter and reached the

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

tomb first. ⁵ And stooping to look in, [John] saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Peter came, ... and went into the tomb. Peter saw the linen cloths lying there, ⁷ and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then [John] also went in, and he saw and believed. ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to their homes.

Hymns:

In the Garden, p. 13

Standing on the Promises, p. 14

Second Reading: We continue the story in John's gospel:

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

Hymn:

Amazing Grace, p. 16

When the Saints Go Marching In, p. 17

Third reading: We continue the story in John's gospel:

¹⁹ On 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." ²⁰ When Jesus had said this, he showed his disciples his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me,

even so I am sending you.”²² Then Jesus breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

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

Hymn:

How Great Thou Art, p. 18

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? (*Use visual aids here*)
 - 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 happens when you put a seed in the ground?
 - It splits; the husk falls away; it transforms
- What would happen to the seed if you never planted it?
 - Nothing! It wouldn’t change; it wouldn’t become alive, transform into what it’s meant to be.
- What kind of power does it take to change things that look lifeless into things that look (and are) alive and beautiful? Do we humans have the power to make a seed grow or even to make a baby grow? No... What kind of power does that take?
 - 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 and will die, but God’s promise is that we live with God forever.
 - When Jesus died it looked like death had won; but the empty tomb showed God to be the most powerful of all.
 - Jesus’ story becomes OUR story – death to life.
- 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 “fear not”? Instead of fear, what should the disciples (and we) focus on?
 - God is in control, no matter how bad or scary things look.
 - Our story is now faith, not fear – not even death can harm us eternally.

Let us thank God for the miracle of life and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, by whose life we are given eternal life. Let’s pray silently for a moment.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray 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.

Suggested Hymns:

I Know that My Redeemer Lives, p. 23

The Old Rugged Cross, p. 24

Reading: An Easter Prayer

Lord God, we thank you.
 From seeds, you bring growth.
 From winter, you bring spring.
 From despair, you bring hope.
 From anxiety, you bring peace.
 And from death, you bring life.
 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.

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. Amen.²

Hymns:

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross, p. 25

Crown Him with Many Crowns, p. 27

(To God be the Glory, p. 28)

Closing Blessing:³

For our closing blessing, let's start by repeating the glorious truth we began today's service with: I'll say "Christ is Risen" and you say "He is risen indeed!"
Let's pray:

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— Christ, who gives his light to all creation, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

(Strike bell as you say the word "Lord")

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his to face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn:

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

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

Christ the Lord is Risen Today, p. 29

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