

April 12, 2020
EASTER SUNDAY
ST. JOHN UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST



Rev. Rosemary Captain
Liturgy written by © 2020 Thom M. Shuman

Service Prayers for Easter Day

CALL TO WORSHIP:

We are still isolated, still feeling like we have been left alone in a shadowed place, but this is the day:

hope tiptoes us awake; light guides us through the shadows.

We are keeping a safe distance from others, we are quarantining ourselves, we are not gathering as God's

people, but this is the day the Lord:

plants joy in our winter hearts; drowns out despair's cries with laughter.

This is a time of uncertainty and fear, we wonder what today will bring, we worry about the coming tomorrow, but this is the day the Lord has made

the day grace does cartwheels in graveyards; resurrection wonder outshines the brightest sun; an empty tomb fills us with good news.

INVOCATION: Good News God, your angels appeared to the faithful women of Jesus' company, bringing them news more wonderful and awe-inspiring than they could imagine –

Christ is Risen! Surely your angels can interrupt our lives, too, breaking into our losses and sorrows and offering a message of tremendous joy to change our lives!

Come this Easter morning, we pray, and fill us with the joy of the women disciples, the first witnesses to your resurrection, that our lives may also be renewed in hope and glory.

Let us roll back the stone of the grave and sing Alleluia once again! In Christ we pray, **Amen.**

CALL TO RECONCILIATION:

We find ourselves living in the shadows these days, afraid to follow the light. We wander in our backyards, alone, looking for God in these days. Yet we are still, we will be again, we are always Easter people! Let us speak of our fears of having the resurrection promise wiped away by the virus of fear and panic, as we pray together, saying,

UNISON PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS:

Unable to gather together, still on this day, as we walk through the shadows of our lives, we come to you, God who dispels our fears. Too often, we believe our foolishness is hidden from you; too often, we stand before the open door of hope, wondering if we dare enter. Uncertain of the good news offered to us, we would rather return to the comfort of our familiar ways rather than trusting in you.

Yet you come, as persistent as Mary at the tomb, joy of our hearts, to open the gates of hope, so we might walk in the gardens of hope; you come, to open the gates of grace, so we might plant peace in the wilderness of the world; you come, to open the gates of resurrection, so we might know our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Silence is kept

ASSURANCE OF PARDON:

This is the day of resurrection and new life. This is the day God offers us steadfast hope and love which will never end.

**We will sing and dance on this day! We are still and we will be again; we are always Easter people! We will rejoice and give thanks to the God who saves us.
Amen.**

SCRIPTURE TEXT: Matthew 28: 1-10

MESSAGE: If ever there was a time for good news, THIS IS IT! Some of us are unhappy because we can't celebrate Easter in our sanctuary; no choirs singing with gusto, no Easter lilies adorning the back table, no

Communion Table, no Fellowship time with our Faith Family. Yet we must remember that there was no church building when Jesus was on the cross; there was no church building when he was put into the tomb; there was no church building when the women found the tomb empty. **JESUS WAS RESURRECTED ANYWAY!!** God's work knows no boundaries. God's love is in our hearts, wherever we are. We can shout "Alleluia!! He is risen" from our open windows so our neighbors know the very good news that death does not have the last word. Jesus lives and so shall we. **PRAISE THE LORD!!**

CALL TO OFFERING: (Please don't forget to mail in your offerings. St. John UCC, 10207 Lincoln Trail, Fairview Heights, IL 62208)

Though alone, separated from others, we can still offer our gifts on this joyous morning, praying that they may bring light to those in the shadows, laughter to all who mourn, and hope to those longing for life anew. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION: *Even though we are not together in person, we are together in the Spirit. If you chose, get a piece of bread or cracker or whatever you have, and a cup of juice or water or coffee. Then read the words that follow and partake.*

May resurrection's God be with you!

And also with you!

This is the day to offer yourselves to God.

We open our hearts to the One who fills them with grace.

Join in the glad songs of all creation this day.

**Our voices praise the One who opens wide
the gates of life.**

When only emptiness stretched out, you spoke at that time, Joyous God, and goodness and beauty sprang forth:

Time after time after time, you sent the prophets to remind us of your never-ending love, but we chose to remain in sin's tomb, the stone of our rebellion locking us away. So, you sent your Hopeful heart, your grace made flesh so we might not be given over to death.

With those who see and believe, with those who stand and question, we lift our Easter songs to you:

Holy, holy, holy are you, God who has made this day!

All creation celebrates your constant love.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the One who is revealed on this morning.

Hosanna in the highest!

When he could have clung to your glory, God who alone is holy, Jesus chose to become human at that time, so we might be filled with your grace. When we stood against the wall wondering if anyone noticed us, he came to take us by the hand to teach us new dance steps.

When our lives crumble around us and we lie scattered on the ground, he gathers us up, reshaping us into your beloved community. When we were unable to break the power of evil over us, he allowed sin to toss him aside like a pebble in a shoe, until he was raised from the tomb because you refuse to give us over to death.

As we stand before the empty tomb, celebrating the

great news of this day, we would have that faith which is a mystery:

Christ died, so sin could not hold on to us;

Christ was raised, so death could not hold on to him;

Christ will come, to hold us in steadfast love and hope.

At this time, wherever we find ourselves, at home, in apartments, in care facilities, pour out your Spirit upon your people and on the gifts of the feast of the resurrection.

May the bread which is broken open like the tomb, strengthen us so we may go to rebuild shattered hopes, to bind up the hurts of the world.

May the cup which is filled with the fruits of your steadfast love, nourish us to leave the shadows of our fears and doubts to stand with the lonely and forgotten, to listen to the cries of the world.

And in that time to come, when we will be gathered with our sisters and brothers of every place and of every moment, we will sing your praises, God in Community, Holy in One, as you hold on to us forever. Amen.

On the night he was betrayed, Jesus had a meal with his friends. He took a loaf of bread and after giving thanks to God, he broke it and gave it to his disciples.

He said, "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

After supper Jesus took the cup of wine; and after giving thanks, gave it to them and said, "Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Whenever you drink it, remember me.

Let us pray:

God our Creator, thank you for the gift of your son Jesus Christ, whose love pursues us our whole life long. Thank you, Jesus, for giving your life to us in word and deed, even unto death, even death on a cross.

Come Holy Spirit, feed us with your love that we may be filled with power to love God with all our hearts and souls and minds. Amen.

The bread broken. The cup poured.

Take and eat. Take and drink.

BENEDICTION: Scattered from one another,
we can still go with God into the world.

**We will offer healing and hope to all
who wander in the shadows of life.**

Separated from one another,
we can still go with Jesus to serve others.

**We will listen to the ignored;
we will speak out for the forgotten.**

Alone, stuck wherever we live,
we can still join the Spirit in offering steadfast love.

**We will hold on to the fallen;
we will rebuild shattered communities.**

“CHRIST THE LORD IS RISEN TODAY”

Charles Wesley 1739

Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!
Mortal tongues and angels say: Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, glad heavens, and earth reply: Alleluia!

**MAY THE JOY OF EASTER REMAIN WITH YOU
TODAY AND EVERY DAY.
PEACE AND BLESSINGS, Pastor Rosemary**

FOR FURTHER STUDY: Acts 10: 34-43, Psalm 118: 1-2,
14-24, Colossians 3: 1-4

