

EASTER SUNDAY

APRIL 4, 2021



**To Give Thanks
for What God has Done:**

St. John United Church of Christ
10207 Lincoln Trail
Fairview Heights, IL 62208
Telephone 397-6323
Secretary – Judy Hartman
Rev. Rosemary Captain

Prayers and Liturgy by
Rev Dr Sheila Harvey Guillaume
Organist – Sharon Banjavcic
Music Director – Nancy Eisenhauer

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

PRELUDE: “Christ the Lord is Risen Today” Ethel Smith
Piano/Organ Duet
Sharon Banjavcic and Nancy Eisenhauer

***CALL TO WORSHIP:**

Christ is Risen!

Christ is risen, indeed!

One: Hope is alive!

Hope is alive, indeed!

God’s love is eternal!

Hallelujah!

Let us give thanks for what God has done.

***PRAYER OF INVOCATION:**

God of grace and power,
we come rejoicing in Christ’s empty tomb.

We come trusting in the good news
that tells us Christ is with us.

For the Risen Christ is living proof
that You care about our lives, O God.

The Risen Christ offers to us glimpses of hope,
even in our tears.

As the tomb is not quiet.

It speaks. It proclaims!

It is a promise of eternal life!

Thank you, gracious and almighty God. Amen.

***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

**God of resurrection grace,
Help us in our pain, despair and fear
so that we are not prone to follow
the path of hopelessness.**

**Help us, to instead, be like the Risen Christ,
and rise up, as a brave and holy people,
living beyond our pain, despair and fear
by remaining hopeful in your steadfast love.
Help us, we pray. Amen.**

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON:**

God hears our prayers of grace and mercy,
and raises our countenance from despair,
into resurrection joy!

God meets us in our human suffering,
comforts us in our tears,
and offers to us new hope,
Hallelujah!

***GLORIA PATRI:** (Music only)

Glory to the Creator, the Christ,
the Holy Spirit, Three-in-One,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen. Amen.

FOR THE CHILD IN US ALL: "God is With Us" video

***GOSPEL: John 20:1-18**

20 Early in the morning of the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. ² She ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they've put him." ³ Peter and the other disciple left to go to the tomb. ⁴ They were running together, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and was the first to arrive at the tomb. ⁵ Bending down to take a look, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he didn't go in. ⁶ Following him, Simon Peter entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. ⁷ He also saw the face cloth that had been on Jesus' head. It wasn't with the other clothes but was folded up in its own place. ⁸ Then the other disciple, the one who arrived at the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ They didn't yet understand the scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying.

¹¹ Mary stood outside near the tomb, crying. As she cried, she bent down to look into the tomb. ¹² She saw two angels dressed in white, seated where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and one at the foot. ¹³ The angels asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

She replied, "They have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they've put him." ¹⁴ As soon as she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn't know it was Jesus.

¹⁵ Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she replied, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him.”

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabbouni” (which means *Teacher*).

¹⁷ Jesus said to her, “Don’t hold on to me, for I haven’t yet gone up to my Father. Go to my brothers and sisters and tell them, ‘I’m going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, “I’ve seen the Lord.” Then she told them what he said to her.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Thanks be to God.

MESSAGE: “Can You Believe it?!!”

What a story?! Last Sunday we read most of the passion story. Today we have this crazy story about Jesus, who tried to bring God’s love and caring into the world, yet he’s arrested and tortured to death. His body is put into a tomb and secured with a huge stone. Three days later, the tomb empty!! You think he just walked out? That’s unlikely, yet even more unlikely, he is alive!! He talks to people. He eats with people. HE IS RESURRECTED FROM THE DEAD!!

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?!!

I mean that just doesn’t happen. I don’t know anybody personally who has been resurrected; resuscitated? Yes, many times. But no one who is dead, dead, comes back to life! That’s just too much to believe!! After all, do YOU know anyone except Jesus, who has been resurrected? I thought not.

So what are we supposed to do with this crazy story? If we tell anybody else who has never heard it before, they will think we’re touched in the head. We can’t ask our friends to believe a story that we don’t understand or believe.

And that’s where the problem lies. It’s been over 2000 years and this story comes up every year. Our Bible is full of words that teach us about this Jesus who is resurrected. And we are expected to believe these words and follow his example. But this happened 2000 years ago. Not in my lifetime.

All these words Jesus said make a lot of sense. You know, feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty. Treat people fairly if I want to be treated fairly. I can do those things. He said a lot about love. That sounds good too. I can do those things BUT BELIEVE HE WAS RESURRECTED? I DON’T KNOW ABOUT THAT.

Besides, how does Jesus know so much? It says in the Bible that he received his wisdom from his father who is God. Now there’s another unbelievable story!! Who has God for a father?

All of this is very upsetting. All I want is a little peace. My friends who believe all these stories seem to be at

peace. Maybe I just need to believe like that? They have faith that this resurrected one CAN bring us all peace with the love he shared. When I see everything God has done for us, I guess I can believe it. I'd like to believe that. HOW ABOUT YOU? CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? Amen.

ANTHEM: St. John Choir and Friends

"Sing a Resurrection Song" Lloyd Larson

INVITATION TO OFFERING:

On this day, we remember that Mary Magdalene arrives at the tomb with the intent to anoint the crucified body of Jesus; and astonished, she finds an empty tomb where Jesus once laid.

Now what?

God's angels and the Risen Christ meet Mary Magdalene in her sorrow, and speak hope into her heart.

For the Resurrection narrative reveals that love is alive and moves among us!

The Risen Christ helps us to remember that despair is not the end of our journey.

The Risen Christ also speaks of God's ever-present love, and gives the church resurrection hope.

In that, as an Easter people, we manifest God's never-ending love in the world

by the giving of our time, talents, and financial resources.

For it is with Christ's limitless and restorative love, that we humbly and graciously offer back to God a portion of what God has given us.

DOXOLOGY: Music only

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below;

Praise God for all that love has done;

Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.

DEDICATION:

God of love, we offer our gifts of time, spiritual gifts, and financial gifts as a sign of our love for you and the world.

We ask a special blessing on these gifts where you meet us in our suffering, and raise us up, so that all may come to know of your abiding love.

O God, we give these gifts as you have given them unto us. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION:

INVITATION:

DIALOGUE:

Christ is Risen!

Christ is risen indeed!

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE:

Creator, Redeemer, and Holy Spirit; source of life, Living Word, and bond of love: We praise you for Jesus Christ, who reminds us that even in fear-filled days, cloaked with the powers of death, your eternal love arises, and never

leaves us. For we rejoice with all your people and with the angels, because life is stronger than death! As we proclaim the glory of your name:

SANCTUS:

**Holy is Jesus, God Incarnate, the Risen Christ,
whose mercy gathers us together in community,
whose grace meets us in our brokenness,
and whose loving faithfulness gives us renewed hope.**

STORY OF THE MEAL:

In this meal, we remember Jesus, his promises,
and the price he paid for who he was, what he said,
and what he did; for our benefit.

On the night before Jesus died,
He took a loaf of bread,
Gave thanks, broke it, and said,
“Take and eat, this is my body, given for you.
Do this, in remembrance of me.”

After supper, Jesus took the cup and poured, saying,
“This is the cup of the new covenant,
poured out for you and for all people for the forgiveness of
sins. Do this in remembrance of me.”
In sharing this meal, we live out the mystery of our faith:

**We remember Christ’s life of love, and friendship, and
teaching,
We remember Christ’s dying, and rising to life again.**

PRAYER TO THE SPIRIT:

Bless this bread and this cup, the wheat and the grape,
the farmer and the harvest, the seed and the sower.
These simple elements are shared in community,
so that we may taste and see your goodness
and become one body in Christ.

**For it is through Christ, in Christ, and with Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, that all glory is yours, God
most holy, now and forevermore. Amen.**

THE LORD’S PRAYER:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your
kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in
heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our
debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the
kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

DISTRIBUTION: BREAKING THE BREAD, POURING THE CUP

The body of Christ,
the bread of life.
The lifeblood of Christ,
the cup of blessing.
The gifts of God for the people of God.
Thanks be to God.

SHARING THE ELEMENTS:

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING: Let us pray:

O Christ, we thank you for this feast of life.

Fed by your love, and strengthened by your life;
we humbly accept your call to go into this world to live
with hope, and to share your joy.

**You commission us to feed as we have been fed,
forgive as we have been forgiven,
and love as we have been loved.**

Thanks be to God. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

May God's abiding love and hope give us new life.

May God's unmerited grace and mercy keep us hope-filled.

And may God's restorative justice bring to us all, perfect
peace.

For Christ is risen! Praise God!

Hallelujah!

POSTLUDE: "Easter Celebration Medley" Gary Lanier

Piano/Flute Duet Stacie Pickens/Sharon Banjavcic

**To Give Thanks for What God has Done, Service prayers
with Communion for Easter Sunday Year B**, was written by
the Rev .Dr. Sheila Harvey Guillaume, pastor of Union
Congregational United Church of Christ in West Palm
Beach.



**PRAYER LIST: We pray for the health and well-being of all
affected by the pandemic and we especially pray for:**

Urban Baum, Donna Isselhard, Becky Ballard, P.J. Bennett,
Nelson Libell, Joe Knapp, Danny Ballard.