

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

APRIL 7, 2024

"PEACE BE WITH YOU"



ST. JOHN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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(NCH) New Century Hymnal CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able.
Respond with words in bold print.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

PRELUDE: "It is Well" Philip Bliss

PENNIES FOR MISSION: Uni-pres Kindercottage

*RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Peace be with you."

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Here are the marks on my body."

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ's peace is with us. We don't need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

*INVOCATION:

Resurrected Christ, you have taught us how the unbelievable can be possible. When there is so much to fear in the world, we can find peace in your presence. As we worship, breathe your Spirit on us, that we may carry it with us. Help us comfort our

neighbors. Help us serve a world of need. We pray this with thanksgiving for your work among us. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 253 “Yours is the Glory”**

***INVITATION TO CONFESSION:** Life with eternity in it is God’s present gift to us. We have heard it, but we are slow to believe. We have received it, but we are slow to trust. It is ours to enjoy, but we have not lived it. Let’s discuss the matter with our Creator.

***PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**
God, we confess that we too might be like Thomas. As we are overwhelmed by the world’s grief, it’s natural for us to be cynical. It’s hard to believe that hope is possible when hope is hard to find. But when we stop believing in hope, we also stop believing liberation can be possible. When we stop working to tear down injustice and discrimination, we stop others from experiencing the peace we have found in you. Forgive our unbelief, calm our fears, and help us be instruments of your peace. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Beloved, Jesus comes to us with grace, telling us we can believe. Because we believe, we can also be empowered to do the work of justice. Yes, the world is heavy. No, the work will never be done. But because we know Christ’s peace, we can share it with others.

People: We believe in the grace and peace of Christ. We are forgiven. Alleluia!

***GLORIA:**

Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (repeat two more times.) (end) One God always here. One God always here.

SCRIPTURE LESSONS: Acts 4:32-35

Sharing among the believers

³² The community of believers was one in heart and mind. None of them would say, “This is mine!” about any of their possessions, but held everything in common. ³³ The apostles continued to bear powerful witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and an abundance of grace was at work among them all. ³⁴ There were no needy persons among them. Those who owned properties or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds from the sales, ³⁵ and place them in the care and under the authority of the apostles. Then it was distributed to anyone who was in need.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 133 Page 712

SECOND TESTAMENT: 1 John 1:1-2:2
Announcement about the word of life

1 We announce to you what existed from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have seen and our hands handled, about the word of life. **2** The life was revealed, and we have seen, and

we testify and announce to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us. ³ What we have seen and heard, we also announce it to you so that you can have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We are writing these things so that our joy can be complete.

God is Light

⁵ This is the message that we have heard from him and announce to you: “God is light and there is no darkness in him at all.” ⁶ If we claim, “We have fellowship with him,” and live in the darkness, we are lying and do not act truthfully. ⁷ But if we live in the light in the same way as he is in the light, we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from every sin. ⁸ If we claim, “We don’t have any sin,” we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from everything we’ve done wrong. ¹⁰ If we claim, “We have never sinned,” we make him a liar and his word is not in us.

Living in the light

2 My little children, I’m writing these things to you so that you don’t sin. But if you do sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. ² He is God’s way of dealing with our sins, not only ours but the sins of the whole world.

***GOSPEL LESSON: John 20:19-31**

Jesus appears to the disciples

¹⁹ It was still the first day of the week. That evening, while the disciples were behind closed doors because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities, Jesus came and stood among them. He said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. When the disciples saw the Lord, they were filled with joy. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you.” ²² Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven; if you don’t forgive them, they aren’t forgiven.”

Jesus appears to Thomas and the disciples

²⁴ Thomas, the one called Didymus, one of the Twelve, wasn’t with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples told him, “We’ve seen the Lord!” But he replied, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, put my finger in the wounds left by the nails, and put my hand into his side, I won’t believe.” ²⁶ After eight days his disciples were again in a house and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus entered and stood among them. He said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here. Look at my hands. Put your hand into my side. No more disbelief. Believe!” ²⁸ Thomas responded to Jesus, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus replied, “Do you believe because you see me? Happy are those who don’t see and yet believe.” ³⁰ Then Jesus did many

other miraculous signs in his disciples' presence, signs that aren't recorded in this scroll. ³¹ But these things are written so that you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son, and that believing, you will have life in his name.

MESSAGE:

Let's suppose that you and your spouse are leaving on a 2 week trip. You still have children at home but they are old enough legally to be left at home alone.

However, they are older teenagers or young adults who have never had this type of responsibility.

A message from mom and dad is required.

"Don't forget to take the trash out and put the bins on the curb on Fridays. Don't forget to feed the dog and take it for walks. The liquor cabinet is locked and we have the keys. No parties. No sleepovers in the house. . . etc." The children are probably rolling their eyes at their mom. They are anxious to have their parents out the door. They are looking forward to 2 weeks of freedom.

On the other hand, we have Jesus preparing his disciples for his departure to be with his Father. Jesus says, "Peace be with you." No instructions on taking out the trash. The disciples are in a different frame of mind. First of all, they can't believe Jesus is standing in front of them. They saw him die on the cross. They are afraid they will be next. They had heard the tomb

was empty, but they didn't know what that meant. Did someone steal the body of Jesus? And now he stands before them, and he says, "Peace be with you." In those days that phrase was a very common greeting when people met their friends. But this time it seemed to mean something completely different. It sounded more like, "Calm down. It's okay. You are safe. I know you are wondering why I am here. You may be relieved that I have returned to you, but I won't be here for long. I need all of you to put your fear behind and look forward to your mission to tell others about me. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world gives. You are to live according to this gift of peace I give you. No matter what happens in the future, my peace will guide you through."

Jesus continues, ²¹ "When a woman gives birth, she has pain because her time has come. But when the child is born, she no longer remembers her distress because of her joy that a child has been born into the world. ²² In the same way, you have sorrow now; but I will see you again, and you will be overjoyed. No one takes away your joy."

I'm sure they are not looking forward to Jesus leaving them. His departure may not look like freedom to them. So, before Jesus leaves them, he commissions the entire faith community to continue the work God sent him to do. The gift of

the Holy Spirit is a part of this commissioning. They must rely on the Holy Spirit to remind them of the peace Jesus gifted them.

By the way. Mom has called Aunt Tilly to come stay the children, just in case. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC: “O Happy Day” Video by the Jackson Choral Society

UCC MINUTE: Judy Schmitt

PASTORAL PRAYER:

God of peace and God of love. We are grateful for those gifts you have given us. In a world of fear, those words keep us on even keel throughout any storms.

Sovereign God, you have called us to pray not only for ourselves but for all humanity. We pray for your church everywhere in the world that all your people may pray without ceasing, using whatever name for God they wish.

Bless all those people in government and positions of authority that they may

govern with clarity and charity. Sustain all who give themselves to serve those in need; those who teach immigrants, social workers who care for the poor and the those who are unable to care for themselves, church visitors who attend to shut-ins and those who send them cards. Bless all our clinics, nursing homes, hospitals, and health services that your work of healing may continue among us.

We pray all these things in the name of the one who taught us to pray . . .

THE 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

**PRAYER RESPONSE: 775 “Eagle’s Wings”
And God will raise you upon eagle’s wings,
Bear you on the breath of dawn,**

**Make you to shine like the sun,
and hold you in the palm of God's hand.**

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

OFFERTORY: "Surely the Presence" Lanny Wolfe

***DOXOLOGY:**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

***UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND
DEDICATION:**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 510**

"O God of Love, O God of Peace"

***BENEDICTION:**

Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace! Receive the

Holy Spirit deep in your being, and share your new life in Christ with the world! Amen!

***BENEDICTION RESPONSE:**

"Let There Be Peace on Earth"

***POSTLUDE: "Easter Recessional" Chester Nordman**