

The Worship of God

GINTER PARK BAPTIST CHURCH

An Easter Sunrise Service for Individuals & Families • April 12, 2020

*No gathered choirs are singing; no banners lead the way.
O God of love and promise, where's joy this Easter Day?
With sanctuaries empty, may homes become the place
we ponder resurrection and celebrate your grace.”¹*

“This Easter celebration is not like ones we’ve known.”¹ So many things are different from Easters past, and it is very easy to spend our time focused on what is missing from our celebration this day instead of embracing the gifts an Easter like this brings. One such gift is the opportunity to embrace the stillness, the intimacy of that moment when Mary met the risen Jesus in the garden that first Easter morning, or to try and imagine what the disciples who rushed to the tomb must have been thinking when they thought somebody had stolen the body only to discover later that wasn’t the case at all.

We can be distracted by our Easter worship trappings, beautiful as they may be, and forget to stop and reflect on what it means to us personally and to the community God is calling us to serve, that “for our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again...”² So this year, you are invited to experience Easter in a different, quieter, way.

For the service, all you need is yourself and this document. The service can be easily done in your living room or around the kitchen table. If circumstances allow, consider getting up before sunrise (6:38AM in Richmond) and going outside for the service to pay attention as night turns to twilight turns to daylight. If you have a fire pit, you are welcome to light a bonfire. There is an instruction at the start of the service to light a candle if you have one available to represent the Christ candle.

You can read the scripture passage from your own Bible, though the text is included for your convenience. The service includes a hymn that you may wish to sing or hum as you read the lyrics, or simply read the text as a prayer. If you are doing the service with others, take turns reading aloud; some parts have been put in bold to help facilitate alternating readers, though you are welcome to break it up (or not) anyway you wish. And even if you are doing the service by yourself, consider speaking parts of the service out loud, perhaps the prayers.

In all of it, do what feels right to you in the moment; there is no right or wrong way to use this resource.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Peace,

Sheryl Johnson, Associate Pastor

¹ From the hymn, “This Easter Celebration,” text copyright © 2020 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

² Nicene Affirmation of Faith.

This Easter Celebration

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, 2020

Aurelia

Samuel Sebastian Wesley, 1864

1. This Eas - ter ce - le - bra - tion is not like ones we've known.
2. No gath-ered choirs are sing - ing; no ban-ners lead the way.
3. Our joy won't come from wor - ship that's in a crowd-ed room
4. In all the grief and suf-fering, may we re-mem-ber well:
5. We thank you that on Eas - ter, your church is blessed to be

We pray in i - so - la - tion, we sing the hymns a - lone.
O God of love and prom - ise, where's joy this Eas - ter Day?
but from the news of wom - en who saw the emp - ty tomb.
Christ suf - fered cru - ci - fix - ion and faced the powers of hell.
a scat - tered, faith - ful bo - dy that's do - ing mi - ni - stry.

We're dis-tant from our neigh - bors— from wor - ship lead - ers, too.
With sanc - tu - a - ries emp - ty, may homes be-come the place
Our joy comes from di - sci - ples who ran with haste to see—
Each Eas - ter bears the pro-mise: Christ rose that glo - rious day!
In homes and in the pla - ces of help and heal - ing, too,

No flo - wers grace the chan - cel to set a fes - tive mood.
we pon - der re - sur - rec - tion and ce - le - brate your grace.
who heard that Christ is ris - en, and then, by grace, be - lieved.
Now no - thing in cre - a - tion can keep your love a - way.
we live the Eas - ter mes - sage by glad - ly serv - ing you.

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CALL TO WORSHIP

Think of a moment when someone that you least expected to see suddenly stands before you.

A moment when something you'd lost is found again and you can scarcely believe your eyes.

Think of a moment when your fear was suddenly proved unfounded and you were surprised by joy.

This morning is such a moment.

We resign ourselves to the worst, and suddenly life turns around.

So come this Easter morning, to be shaken from your conviction that nothing can change your situation.

Come if you look at the world and feel overwhelmed by its chaos, or disillusioned by its promises.

On this morning we remember how Mary went to anoint a corpse, and was greeted by a Savior.

Come to worship prepared to see your life and the world through new eyes.

For Christ is risen,

he is risen indeed. Hallelujah!

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

If you have a candle, light it now.

The light of Christ rises in glory, overcoming the darkness of sin and death.

Christ is our light.

OPENING PRAYER

On this Easter morning we welcome you, Jesus, into our lives. We welcome your resurrection for it is life changing, life giving, and life sustaining. We welcome the

hope it brings to our world. We welcome the joy it brings to our darkness. We welcome the empty tomb, for we know that it means you are on the loose. Amen.

HYMN "This Easter Celebration" AURELIA
(See separate page)

LITANY OF ADORATION

Lord God,
early in the morning,
when the world was young,
you made life in all its beauty and terror;
you gave birth to all that we know.

Hallowed be your name.

Hallowed be your name.

**Early in the morning,
when the world least expected it,
a newborn child crying in a cradle
announced that you had come among us,
that you were one of us.**

Hallowed be your name.

Hallowed be your name.

Early in the morning,
surrounded by respectable liars,
religious leaders,
anxious politicians,
and silent friends,
you accepted the penalty for doing good,
for being God:

you shouldered and suffered the cross.

Hallowed be your name.

Hallowed be your name.

**Early in the morning,
a voice in a guarded graveyard
and footsteps in the dew
proved that you had risen,
that you had come back
to those and for those**

who had forgotten, denied, and destroyed you.

Hallowed be your name.

Hallowed be your name.

This morning,
in the multicolored company
of your Church on earth and in heaven,
we celebrate your creation, your life,
your death and resurrection,
your interest in us;
so we pray,

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Lord, bring new life,
where we are worn and tired;
new love,
where we have turned hard-hearted;
forgiveness,
where we feel hurt
and where we have wounded;
and the joy and freedom
of your Holy Spirit
where we are prisoners of ourselves.**

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

To all and to each,
on his community and on his friends,
where regret is real,
Jesus pronounces his pardon
and grants us the right to begin again.
**Thanks be to God!
Amen.**

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

O risen Christ, open us to the power of your resurrection as we hear it proclaimed anew this day, that we too might rise to new life in you. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So 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.” Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They 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.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” 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.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because 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.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

SILENT REFLECTION

Spend some time reflecting on the text and that first Easter morning. Some prompts if helpful:

- *What might have been your response had you been there?*
- *Are there moments or words in the story that stand out? Why do they resonate?*
- *How does this story speak to you this day in our present circumstances?*
- *What will you carry with you in hope and comfort for the days ahead?*

You may use this time to simply rest in God’s presence, listening for what God is saying to you in this moment.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Lord of life, hear us as we lift to you our hopes and prayers for the church and the world.

You are invited to offer your prayers either silently or aloud as the Spirit leads.

On this day, O God, Christ’s resurrection gives us hope that nothing—no tragedy, no mistake, no sin, no evil—is beyond the redemptive power of your love. This is the truth of your kingdom, a kingdom we long for, a kingdom for which we now pray using the words the living Christ teaches us:

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; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Go forth in joy.
You have God’s kingdom in your heart.
Go forth in love.
Live for the Lord.
Go with hope and forgiveness.
The grace of God sustains.
Go forth in peace.
Go forth in light.
Amen.
Alleluia!

RESOURCES USED:

The Opening Prayer is part of a prayer written by Abigail Carlisle-Wilke, and posted on Rev Abi’s Long and Winding Road blog <http://vicarofwadley.blogspot.ca>.
The Call to Worship was written by Ann Siddall, and posted on the Stillpoint Spirituality Centre website <https://stillpointsa.org.au>.
The Litany of Adoration, Prayer of Confession, and Assurance of Pardon comes from an Easter prayer titled “Lord God, Early in the Morning,” from *Stages on the Way* by John L. Bell and Wild Goose Worship Group © 2000, GIA Publications, Inc.
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