

## **April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Easter Sunday – Email/At Home Missal**

A blessed Easter Sunday to you, and thank you for joining us for worship, whether by print, email or Zoom. In the course of Holy Week this year, not only have we walked with Jesus through Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday ... we have also moved from Stage Red to Lockdown in Ontario, and so once again we are plunged into a different kind of isolation, and perhaps fear.

This is not unsuited to the journey we begin today which is the Easter journey. During Lent, our journey to the cross, we studied a series of stories and articles about homelessness in tension with our faith. You will receive with this service a final story in the fictional story series, which we will study together during the liturgical season of Easter. But for today, we will be more contextual in looking very specifically at the Easter morning gospel story, of women arriving at a tomb to dress a dead body, and encountering an empty tomb.

### **Easter Sunday Service - April 4, 2021 ZOOM opens at 09:45 AM** **and worship begins at 10:00 am.**

**Join Zoom Meeting:**     <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87808117422?pwd=YU82enZxSjJEak5CUlZKWWYvV2hpQT09>

**Meeting ID: 878 0811 7422**

**Passcode: 034530**

**You don't have to have a computer or internet to connect to any of the Zoom services; you can also just call in on one of these numbers (long distance charges may apply):**

1 587 328 1099 or  
1 647 374 4685 or  
1 647 558 0588 or  
1 778 907 2071 or  
1 204 272 7920 or  
1 438 809 7799

This week, I will be recovering a few untaken days off and my stat Good Friday, to get some rest as this Lent, preparation for our ZOOM AGM, follow-up and Holy Week have been extremely hectic. I will remain available for emergency pastoral care telephone call only while I am taking these rest days.

As we proceed into the season of Easter beyond this week, doorway and walking visits, telephone/video call visits and delivery of home communion kits including a dining table liturgy remain available. These tasks remain part of my work duties, and are allowed during Lockdown. Please contact the church office if you would like any of these ☺ Keep safe: distance, wash, mask and love each other.

With love, in Christ  
Pastor Janaki.

### **Opening words:**

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

***Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!***

**Welcome remarks: A blessed Easter Sunday to you, however you are coming to join us for worship today. Our gathering hymn this morning is #364.**

**Gathering Hymn: #364 Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia**

**Click here:**     <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulcg4PNckAo>

Text: B. Kaymaanywa, H. S. Olson; Tune: Tanzanian Traditional; © Text 1977 Augsburg Fortress  
Reprinted with Permission under One License #A 727610. All Rights Reserved.

### **Greeting:**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all, in your home and in mine.

**Prayer of the Day:** *Life-giving Creator, you meet us at the empty tomb. Jesus is not there - He is risen and alive. Where we feel darkness and death encroaching, where the emptiness of the tomb disturbs us, help us to hold on to hope, through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Way-Maker. Amen*

**The First Reading: Isaiah 65:17-21**

For I am about to create new heavens  
and a new earth;  
the former things shall not be remembered  
or come to mind.  
But be glad and rejoice forever  
in what I am creating;  
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy,  
and its people as a delight.  
I will rejoice in Jerusalem,  
and delight in my people;  
no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it,  
or the cry of distress.  
No more shall there be in it  
an infant that lives but a few days,  
or an old person who does not live out a lifetime;  
for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth,  
and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.  
They shall build houses and inhabit them;  
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. [NRSV]

Word of God, word of life. **C: Thanks be to God.\***

**The Second Reading: Revelations 21: 1-7**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“See, the home of God is among mortals.  
He will dwell with them;  
they will be his peoples,  
and God himself will be with them;  
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
Death will be no more;  
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
for the first things have passed away.”

And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children. [NRSV]

Word of God, word of life. **C: Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel Acclamation:**

**Arise, My Soul, Arise ELW 827, Text Johan Kahl, Finnish Folk Tune; Bradley Moggach, Piano**

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1V7AinwJHk>

Text: Johan Karl/ Tr. Ernest Ryden, Dale Wood; Finnish Folk Tune; Text: © 1958, Augsburg Fortress  
All Rights Reserved. Reprinted with Permission. under ONE LICENSE # A727610

### **The Holy gospel according to Luke 24:1-9**

***C: Glory to you, O Lord.***

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, the women went to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared [to finish anointing the body]. And they found the [large, circular] stone rolled back from the tomb, but when they went inside, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed *and* wondering about this, suddenly, two men in dazzling clothing stood near them; and as the women were terrified and were bowing their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why are you looking for the living One among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how He told you, while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise [from death to life].” And they remembered His words, and after returning from the tomb, they reported all these things to the eleven [apostles] and to all the rest. [The Amplified Translation]

The Gospel of our Lord. ***C: Praise to you, O Christ.***

### **Message (Imagine Pastor Janaki’s voice here 😊)**

With the announcement of lockdown coming in the midst of Holy Week preparations, I considered re-using last year’s Easter Sunday message, because in some sense it felt to me like we had not moved much farther away from where we were a little over a year ago, when the pandemic began to impact us here in Cambridge, and our church had to be closed.

But then, I listened to the song we will sing for our Hymn of the Day today, a brand new song written by a colleague of Brad’s, Rev John Oldham, with melody written by Brad. And in my inbox today was another new song, another new Oldham/Moggach collection. And I browsed through our YouTube channel and saw how much new content we have produced during this year ...

I read through last year’s service, when the pandemic lockdown was just five services old, and everything was being delivered in print and email only ... and I thought about how we worked our way through safety protocols, to re-open our building for worship for six Sundays in the Fall. I thought about how we have figured out our own St Peter’s way of worship on Zoom, where we can see those who gather, and we can sing together – something we could not do in with our pandemic safety protocols in church, and I thought, no ... it is not true to say we have not moved forward.

I thought about how many of you who are worshipping today, whether by print, email or Zoom have already gotten a first vaccine, and others are registered to receive one. About how we had a combined ZOOM-mail-in AGM, and how we had difficult discussions at that AGM, yet had them well – and I felt it would be a denial of God’s own faithfulness to us to be caught up in the fear, depression and anxiety of lockdown. Because, today, Alleluia, Christ is Risen.

Christ is Risen indeed, Alleluia.

The Risen Christ leaves behind an empty tomb. And because nature abhors a vacuum, something must sweep in to occupy that empty space. And if we are not sure what ought to sweep in, what is sweeping in, what has swept in for millennia of God’s faithful people, we only need to look to the scriptures to understand how God’s faithfulness is not only foretold but experienced and witnessed through the trajectory of time.

Our three readings today span millennia ... Isaiah speaking of a time of exile, when God’s faithful people are promised restoration to their own lands from which they have been forcefully expelled by the power of a conquering empire.

It may feel to us at times that COVID-19 has been like this – a force that has been so powerful it has had its way with all of life as we know it. And it has certainly changed so much in our world. But it has not removed our faith, and it has not obliterated our love of each other ... we demonstrate this love every time we safe distance, every time we hand wash, every time we put on a mask.

Just as the Babylonian troops did not conquer the faith and spirit of the Israelite people, so we also will our faith and spirit survive the assault of a pandemic.

Our second reading, from Revelations, speaks not of a time in history, but a time in the future ... a time when God will create for us a new heaven and a new earth, because the former things have passed away. A time in which God dwells with mortals ... sounds like God is in our homes, wait a minute ... God is in our homes ☺ For here we are, worshipping at home today ☺

We may feel a sense of grief and loss about not being able to worship in our sanctuary, but by no means has God been far from us ... in fact, quite the contrary as so many of you have told me how, during this pandemic time, you have felt God's presence in a differently intimate way.

So this Easter Sunday:

What are we really doing?

What are we really celebrating?

What are we really mourning about?

What are we really looking forward to?

The women go to the tomb, in the Gospel of Luke reading, to dress a dead body with spices. This was a means of forestalling the stench of decay which is normal when a body has died. When they get to the tomb, they find the big stone covered its entrance rolled away, and the tomb is empty.

Is our sanctuary still a sanctuary when it is empty of our bodies?

Is our grief about missing "church", the building, the tradition formed by doctrine about loving God with all we have and all we are?

Or is this grief like the grief of the women who carry spices to dress a dead, decaying body that is no longer there?

For none of us can deny that Jesus has walked with us all through this pandemic; none of us, even those of us who have experienced the hand of mortal death taking our loved ones away ... perhaps especially those of us who have lost loved ones would have to agree that God has found ways to be with us – in our homes, with our loved ones, with our community who found different ways to extend the God-fingerprinted loving-kindness to us.

Christ is not in the tomb. Jesus is risen – and if we, like the women encountering the empty tomb – were to share a story of witness, what would that story be? What would the centrepiece of the story be?

Would it be about death spices we were not able to apply to a decaying body?

Or would it be about the wonder of a tomb we find empty, and the possibility, the opportunity, the hope that emptiness represents?

Is our Easter story about filling our world with the witness and story of God's abundance in salvation, through death and resurrection? Or is our story about death and that empty space where a dead body once lay?

These are important questions to ask in third-wave, variant-evolving, vaccine-hesitancy times ...

What is your story of Easter?

How do you come to the empty tomb?

How will you witness to this day, when we celebrate: Christ is Risen indeed?

What does your Easter religion look like??

I point you to our resurrection hymnody for some ideas.

Because our faith story does not end here.

We look to a new heaven and a new earth that emerges from this pandemic earth, from the empty tomb.

Amen.

### **Hymn of the Day: Loving-Kindness is my Religion**

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoE9U4zl8uw>

Text: John Oldham; Music: Bradley Moggach; Copyright reserved.

### **Prayers of Intercession:**

Confident that God provides for us abundantly, we bring our prayers before God ...

Holy God, our Father, you give us your son, Jesus,  
and you equip us and empower us with the Holy Spirit.  
You lead us with instructions, by example, and with inner promptings.  
Strengthen us to be obedient to you, and to be hopeful about our leaders.  
Where leaders fall or do wrong, help them to be raised up.

### ***God of Abundance ... hear our prayers.***

Generous & Abundant God, you bless us with many gifts.  
Here in Cambridge, in Waterloo Region:  
you have given us as a congregation the gift of many opportunities:  
    opportunities for partnerships, opportunities for our facilities.  
May we invest our gifts in the work of your Kingdom,  
    as we follow you through these three days.  
Help us to be responsible servants, investing wisely the gifts you give us.  
Help us to return to you, in Word, sacrament and actions of love:  
In this Holy Week, draw us closer to you in the Word.

### ***God of Abundance ... hear our prayers.***

Great and Holy Spirit, you walk alongside us always,  
Nudging us towards deepening relationship with God.  
Be with the families and loved ones of those who have died unexpectedly.  
As we encounter news of pandemic deaths, violence and disasters in our world,  
    keep us open to your nudging,  
    help us to hear you,  
Make us your Holy vessel and a channel for your love.

### ***God of Abundance ... hear our prayers.***

God who sees all and knows all, we Pray:  
For people across Canada who are affected by: family violence and incarceration,  
of whom Indigenous people are affected in disproportionate numbers.  
We pray for our children's and youth ministry.  
We pray for those who are questioning meaning and purpose.

We ask God to be with those who suffer,

especially those we name aloud

or in the silence of our hearts

**(leave time for the prayers to come forward).**

For these we have named, and the ones we hold in our hearts, we pray.

***God of Abundance ... hear our prayers.***

God of Love, you call us to serve our neighbors.

Nourish us with word and sacrament and bless those who are unable to worship today.

Receive our prayers into your tender-loving care, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Share the peace of Christ:**

The Peace of Christ be with you always, in your home and in mine, and throughout God's creation.

**Meal:**

**Click here for the communion liturgy from worship on YouTube:**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HsiaRdyFr50>**

I invite you to prepare your table with bread and wine, or crackers and juice, whatever is available to you, so that you may participate in the meal.

**Communion Hymn (include here for print and email worship):** Christ Lag In Todesbanden ELW 370 J.S.

Bach BWV 625; Bradley Moggach, Organ

**Click here:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jzs28zYaR7w>

**Prayer after Communion**

We give you thanks almighty God,

that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life.

In your mercy and love,

strengthen us in faith towards you and in love towards each other,

in Jesus name we pray.

Amen.

**Sending Hymn # 367 –Now All the Vault of Heaven Resound**

**Click here:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= ddJXow2B s&t=10s>

Text: Paul Strodach 1876-1947; Tune: Lasst Uns Erfreuen (1623) Public Domain

Copyright Holder: Augsburg Fortress; Reprinted with permission under ONE Licence: # A 727610

**Blessing:**

May God bless you and keep you.

May the face of God shine upon you with grace and mercy.

May God look upon you with favor

and give you ☩ peace.

**Amen.**

**Dismissal:**

L: Go with joy, celebrating the empty tomb. **C: Alleluia, Christ is Risen. \***