

**Hybrid Worship for April 9, 2023**  
**Easter Sunday**

**Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements**

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

**Centering Music:** “Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Give Thanks” VU 179 chorus, verse 2 chorus  
Hallelujah, hallelujah. Give thanks to the risen Christ.  
Hallelujah, hallelujah! Give praise to God’s name.

Spread the good news o’er all the earth:  
Jesus has died and is risen.

Hallelujah, hallelujah. Give thanks to the risen Christ.  
Hallelujah, hallelujah! Give praise to God’s name.

**Call to Worship and Opening Prayer**

One: This is the day for celebration -

**All: The day of open tombs and open hearts.**

One: This is the day when we can shout -

**All: Alleluia! Christ is risen – Christ is risen indeed!**

One: God calls us to sing and dance,

**All: God calls us to praise and rejoice.**

One: God calls us to prayer:

**All: Holy One of mystery and power,  
today we share the joy of your love  
shown in life restored,  
in rolling stones,  
in empty tombs,  
in the fear and joy of that first Easter morning.  
Be with us as we worship and work,  
as we seek to find you in those we meet,  
as we follow your way of love and justice.  
we pray in the name of the Risen One,  
Jesus the Christ. Amen**

**Opening Hymn: “The Day of Resurrection” VU 164 verses 1 and 3**

The day of resurrection! Earth, tell it out abroad;  
the passover of gladness, the passover of God!  
From death to life eternal, from earth unto the sky,  
our Christ has brought us over with hymns of victory.

Now let the heavens be joyful, let earth its song begin,  
the round world keep high triumph, and all that  
is therein;  
let all things seen and unseen their notes  
of gladness blend,  
for Christ indeed is risen, our Joy that has no end.

**Bringing back our Alleluias**

**An Easter Prayer of Confession:**

One: Christ, you shed light into our darkened world.

**All: Yet we choose to walk in shadows of indifference and fear:  
forgive us, Risen Christ.**

One: From the cool, refreshing waters of a deep well,  
you offer us a drink of life-giving water.

**All: Yet we choose to drink from wells of bitterness and anger:  
forgive us, Risen Christ.**

One: As life emerges from fertile soil,  
you invite us to newness and growth.

**All: Yet we often choose the parched soil of hatred,  
materialism, and greed:  
forgive us, Risen Christ.**

One: With songs of celebration, you invite us to join the dance of God’s tomorrow.

**All: Yet we choose to sit, ignoring the music.**

*time for silent confession*

One: Take our hands, O Christ, forgiven and restored,

**All: and lead us in the dance of your tomorrow.**

**Sung Response: “Christ is Risen from the Dead” VU 167**

Christ is risen from the dead, glory, hallelujah! (x2)

Jesus Christ is risen, glory, hallelujah! (x2)

**Scripture Readings:**

Colossians 3:1–4      *The Inclusive Bible*

Since you have been resurrected with Christ, set your heart on what pertains to higher realms, where Christ is seated at God’s right hand. Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, not on the things of earth. After all, you died, and now your life is hidden with Christ in God. But when Christ - who is your life - is revealed, you too will be revealed with Christ in glory.

Matthew 28:1–10      *The Inclusive Bible*

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning,  
Mary of Magdala came with Mary to inspect the tomb.

Suddenly there was a severe earthquake, and an angel of God descended from heaven, rolled back the stone and sat on it. The angel’s appearance was like lightning, with garments white as snow. The guards shook with fear and fell down as if they were dead.

Then the angel spoke, addressing the women: “Don’t be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus the crucified, who is no longer here. Jesus has been raised, exactly as it was foretold. Come and see the burial place. Then go quickly and tell the disciples that Jesus has risen from the dead and now goes ahead of you to Galilee. You will see Jesus there. That is the message I have for you.”

The women hurried away from the tomb with awe and great joy and ran to carry the good news to the disciples.

Suddenly Jesus stood before them and said, “Shalom!”

The women came up, embraced Jesus’ feet, and worshipped.

At this Jesus said to them, “Don’t be afraid! Go tell the disciples to go to Galilee, where they will see me.”

**One:** Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

**All:** **Thanks be to God.**

**Choir:** “Beautiful One”

**Reflection:** Fear and great joy

**Hymn:** “Joy Comes with the Dawn” VU 166

Joy comes with the dawn;  
joy comes with the morning sun;  
joy springs from the tomb  
and scatters the night with her song,  
joy comes with the dawn.

Weeping may come;  
weeping may come in the night,

when dark shadows cloud our sight.

Joy comes with the dawn;  
joy comes with the morning sun;  
joy springs from the tomb  
and scatters the night with her song,  
joy comes with the dawn.

Sorrow will turn,  
sorrow will turn into song,  
and God's laughter make us strong.

Joy comes with the dawn;  
joy comes with the morning sun;  
joy springs from the tomb  
and scatters the night with her song,  
joy comes with the dawn.

We will rejoice,  
we will rejoice, and give praise,  
to the One who brings us grace.

Joy comes with the dawn;  
joy comes with the morning sun;  
joy springs from the tomb  
and scatters the night with her song,  
joy comes with the dawn.

### **Introduction to the Offering**

**Gift of Music:** "In the Garden"

**Hymn of Dedication:** "Behold, Behold" MV 115  
Behold, behold, I make all things new,  
beginning with you and starting from today.  
Behold, behold, I make all things new,  
my promise is true, for I am Christ the way.

### **Offering Prayer:**

**All: You, O God, are the Easter One.  
You are the holy source of resurrection.  
You are the dancing spirit of life.**

**We offer these gifts in gratitude  
for hope returned,  
for the mystery of your grace,  
and for the promise of life new and renewed.  
Amen**

### **Prayers of the People**

Loving and Compassionate God,  
you have created the earth and all that is in a delicate dance  
of life and death and new life,  
of beginnings and endings and new beginnings,  
of light and darkness and renewed illumination.  
Today we bring our thanks for that dance, and our part in it.

We thank you for spring flowers breaking free from winter's embrace of the soil,  
we thank you for early morning birdsong,  
we thank you for the continuing greening of fields and lawns.  
We thank you for the rich smells of the earth released from frozenness,  
we thank you for opportunities to gather and celebrate.

We thank you, God, for Jesus, for his self-giving love,  
for his compassion, for his strength, for his resurrection.  
Help us to love, live and find new life as he did, in your name.

We pray for those who face their own stones and barriers today, God,  
those whose path to wholeness and hope may be blocked.  
We lift up those who face the stones of illness or of loss,  
we lift our prayers for the hungry and homeless.  
We remember the ones who have been left on the margins and face  
exclusion, prejudice, violence and even death.

Help us to roll away the stones of despair and hopelessness, God,  
to bring the light of Jesus and of your love streaming into the lives  
of those around us.

We pray in the name of the One who shines with your light,  
who lives again, and who taught us to pray to you, our Abba God,  
our loving parent –

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come,  
your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,

and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.

**Special Music:** “He is Exalted/Christ the Lord is Risen Today”

Congregational verses:

Christ the Lord is ris'n today. Alleluia! Sons of men and angels say: Alleluia!  
Raise your joys and triumphs high: Alleluia! Sing, ye heav'ns and earth reply: Alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King. Alleluia! Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!  
Once He died our souls to save; Alleluia! Where thy victory, O grave? Alleluia!

**Closing Hymn:** “Christ is Alive” VU 158

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.  
The cross stands empty to the sky.  
Let streets and homes with praises ring.  
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.

Christ is alive! No longer bound  
to distant years in Palestine,  
but saving, healing, here and now,  
and touching every place and time.

In every insult, rift, and war,  
where colour, scorn, or wealth divide,  
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,  
and lives, where even hope has died.

Women and men, in age and youth,  
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,  
and find the way, the life, the truth,  
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

Christ is alive, and comes to bring  
good news to this and every age,  
till earth and sky and ocean ring  
with joy, with justice, love and praise.

**Commissioning /Blessing**

**Sung Amen**

### Rev. Joanne's Reflection

The morning was clear and still. Jesus' followers hadn't been sleeping much since they witnessed his crucifixion at Golgotha, and followed the burial procession to the tomb. Two of those restless followers ventured to the tomb just as dawn was breaking, expecting to see the guards still on duty, expecting to weep and support one another in their grief. As if there hadn't been enough calamities in their lives over the past few days, when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary arrive at Jesus' tomb, an earthquake occurs. These events were infrequent in their lives – neither woman had ever experienced such an event. As the ground shook beneath them, as they wondered if they would survive, a heavenly creature of light and power appears and rolls back the stone covering the entrance to Jesus' tomb – and just as surprising, sits casually on the huge rock.

It is too much for the guards – they collapse as if they were dead.

The women, perhaps still numb with grief, do not react the same way, and the angel speaks to them, telling them not to be afraid. He also tells them that this tomb is empty – he invites them to view the bare burial space. Jesus has risen – before the stone was even removed, Jesus was returned to life, and will meet them all in Galilee. Their lives had been shaken by Jesus' death, then their bodies felt the effects of the earth moving and shaking in the earthquake, and now their spirits are shaken to the core – Jesus is alive, raised by God. He did not wander out of the tomb as Lazarus did, but miraculously is already on his way to meet them.

The women ran – with fear and great joy. With awe and wonder and feet fueled by hope and the unexpected, they hurry away to share the news with the other disciples. Jesus has come back – Jesus will meet them all in Galilee, that city where all people meet, not just the Hebrew people, but people from many nations and cultures. Their lives will never be the same, their faith will never be the same, and that brings both fear and joy.

Fear because the threat of the Roman occupiers and the temple authorities did not disappear, fear because they still do not know the path forward, fear because this change is both welcome and overwhelming. But joy – the joy of anticipated reunion with the One they loved, and thought they had lost, the joy of simply seeing Jesus once again, the joy that comes with tears and with also with giddy laughter.

And then Jesus appears on the road, offering them the greeting of peace. They recognize him immediately, they fall to the ground, and embrace his feet, as if to confirm that he is no spirit, but their own flesh-and-blood Jesus – rooted to the earth and in God's love, as he has always been. The fear is still present, even as they worship and thank God for his return, even as their tears and laughter mingled with the dirt of the road where Jesus stood. Jesus knows this, knows that fear and joy can reside within them, within us, at the same moment, and he tells them, as the angel did, not to be afraid. He encourages them to continue on the road to sharing the good news with the disciples.

This Easter morning, as we shout our Alleluias and celebrate the story of resurrection that we know so well, we might recall times in our lives when our worlds have changed, when both fear and joy were alive in us, when we could benefit from Jesus' voice of peace in our ear. I think becoming a parent or grandparent for the first time has those elements of awe and fear and joy. We can feel joy at the baby's

arrival, at new life, fear because this is new and uncontrollable and life changing. I remember that combination of fear and joy when I began university studies – for the first and the second times. Fear of the new, fear of being judged, fear that I might fail, but real joy in the adventure, in the possibilities. In our faith community, we can feel fear when we venture in new directions – fear of losing what we have known, fear of losing the familiar, and yet joy in knowing that God is not finished with us, God still has work for us to undertake.

In all these instances, we can be reminded of the two Marys, who set out from possibly the most important and life-changing event in their lives knowing that God was with them, God had done a great thing, and that despite their fear and awe, Jesus would meet them along their way. We can remember that Jesus did meet them when they did not expect it, with words of peace and encouragement. Jesus is always meeting us along the way – in the faces of those we reach out to help, in the voices of those who love us and encourage us, in the scripture and story we share, and in our own hearts.

Isn't that what Easter is really about - recognizing that Jesus meets us despite our fears and anxieties, despite our shock and disbelief, and in our moments of joy but also in our times of distress, and can never be separated from us. Easter also affirms that God will let nothing stand in the way of love and life – not even death, and we are called to be in relationship with God for all eternity. Christ is risen, death has lost its sting. Jesus is no longer entombed, but freed to meet us along the way.

May we go forward as followers of the Risen One, as individuals and as a community of faith that seeks to live with both joy and fear, with awe and hope, with faith and commitment. May we seek to live a resurrection life, anticipating God's presence, open to the new in both what we believe and what we achieve together, in God's name. May we run to share our good news with the world – do not be afraid, know peace, and know that God is with us forever.

Amen