

Home Service for April 12, 2026

Welcome and Announcements

You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

*In you I take refuge. In you I find life. May I keep you always before me.*

Call to Worship:

Easter people, Christ is risen!  
Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Christ *is* risen indeed! Yet we, like Thomas, may find questions bubbling up: How do we know? What's the proof? Is Resurrection real?  
Within our questioning, Christ appears.

We may find ourselves like the other disciples, witnesses of Christ's resurrection who struggle to understand the doubt of others.  
Within our certainty, Christ appears.

Whether you come to worship full of certainty or doubt, you are welcome here, for we are all participants in the story of God's salvific work in the world, a story still unfolding all around us.  
We gather to worship, believing that in certainty and doubt, the resurrected Christ dwells among us! Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Jesus of the Cross, Jesus of the Resurrection, we rejoice in you. For long before the experience of the cross, you defeated the powers of sin, pain, and death in the hurting people around you. And then *you* were struck down. But you defeated the cross and stood before your beloved disciples, as you are present today—alive again. We rejoice in you, Risen Savior, for you open before us your life-giving peace and power. You are our Lord and our God. Alleluia! Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Jesus Christ, our Brother, our Savior, sometimes we are bold and sure that you are the Living One who defeated death and destruction for us all. Sometimes we wonder at the ancient stories of your resurrection, and we are not so sure that things happened the way stories tell them. Amid our doubts, bless us with your

peace. Bless us with the joy and assurance of your presence, wherever we are in our journey of faith. In your compassionate name, we pray. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

*“Peace be with you!” Jesus said to his disciples, both those who saw and believed and the one who questioned. Today Jesus Christ also bestows his peace and presence upon us: “Peace be with you!” Amen.*

Read Psalm 16

Keep me safe, my God,  
for in you I take refuge.

<sup>2</sup> I say to the Lord, “You are my Lord;  
apart from you I have no good thing.”

<sup>3</sup> I say of the holy people who are in the land,  
“They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight.”

<sup>4</sup> Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more.  
I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods  
or take up their names on my lips.

<sup>5</sup> Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup;  
you make my lot secure.

<sup>6</sup> The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;  
surely I have a delightful inheritance.

<sup>7</sup> I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;  
even at night my heart instructs me.

<sup>8</sup> I keep my eyes always on the Lord.  
With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;  
my body also will rest secure,

<sup>10</sup> because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,  
nor will you let your faithful <sup>[b]</sup> one see decay.

<sup>11</sup> You make known to me the path of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence,  
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Prayers of the People:

*Good and gracious God, Our most glorious Creator, As we greet the signs in nature around us: Of Spring once again regaling us in bloom, In the songs of returning birds and fields soon to be planted, We give you praise for an even*

*greater sign of new life: the resurrection of your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, that we especially celebrate at this time. The sadness and despair of his death has given way to the bright promise of immortality. For the Resurrection is our guarantee that justice will triumph over treason, Light will overcome darkness, and love will conquer death. As we celebrate, we also dare to ask for your grace that we may live the promise given to us, By imitating the life of Jesus in reaching out to the poor, the marginalized, the least among us as we strive to be neighbor to all those we meet. We praise you in this Easter season. Change our lives, change our hearts to be messengers of Easter joy and hope. We make our prayer through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord forever. Amen.*

## 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is The kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Lesson: Acts 2:14a, 22-32

<sup>14</sup> Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

<sup>22</sup> “Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. <sup>23</sup> This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men,<sup>[a]</sup> put him to death by nailing him to the cross. <sup>24</sup> But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. <sup>25</sup> David said about him:

“I saw the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand,

I will not be shaken.

<sup>26</sup> Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;

my body also will rest in hope,

<sup>27</sup> because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,  
you will not let your holy one see decay.

<sup>28</sup> You have made known to me the paths of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence.’<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>29</sup> “Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. <sup>30</sup> But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. <sup>31</sup> Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. <sup>32</sup> God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup> In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup> These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, <sup>9</sup> for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Read the Gospel Lesson: John 20:19-31

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas (also known as Didymus<sup>[a]</sup>), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

<sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

<sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

<sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

<sup>30</sup> Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written that you may believe<sup>[b]</sup> that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

## Message

War and peace are opposites. Good times and bad times are opposites. We are living in times that are filled with wars and troubles. We hear of one disaster after another. Will it ever end? With such bad news always filling our lives we might forget the goodness and greatness of our almighty God. Our loving Lord finds it necessary to encourage believers to pursue peace. As we read today’s Gospel, we find ourselves hearing what seemed the worst of times, at least in the lives of the disciples, what becomes the best of times by the peace of Jesus. May each of us take to heart those precious words of our Savior Jesus Christ, “Peace be this You.”

We are told that the disciples of Jesus, with the exception of Thomas, had gathered together on that evening that the tomb was found to be empty, and Mary Magdalene had reported to have seen the risen Christ. It was Easter evening. But instead of celebrating the news of Christ’s resurrection, we are told that they had gathered behind locked doors, in fear of the Jewish authorities. For they all did not believe. They had their doubts. Remember John and Peter had went and checked it out. Peter saw, but he could not put it all together. John saw and believed. So, I would imagine that he went back and spent the rest of the day trying to convince the rest that what he saw, the empty tomb, the folded linen clothes, the head piece sitting by itself, that this was all the signs that Jesus had indeed risen.

Can you imagine the conversation that took place during that day? They were too afraid of the Jews and the Romans to go out and see, or look for Jesus, so they sat in that upper room sulking, praying, arguing, discussing, pondering, recalling the words of Jesus. I can imagine that John was leading the conversation and Peter boldly trying to make sense of it. The women, especially Mary was trying to

convince the rest of her conviction that Jesus had risen, because she had traveled the long road of doubt and despair and had come to the conclusion, the realization, the belief that Jesus had indeed risen.

I want to call your attention to the place where Jesus chose to meet His disciples after He rose to life. He met them, not in a grand sanctuary or palace, not in their homes, not by the Sea of Galilee, not in the Garden of Gethsemane, but in a locked room that was hidden from most people. Why there? Because it was the place the disciples were huddled together in fear. They had witnessed Jesus' agonizing death, and, no doubt, feared that something similar could happen to them. To quiet and reassure them, Jesus went to them where they were.

Take heart because He does the same for us. He meets us where we are, wherever that may be. Certainly, here in our place of worship, but also in hectic places of work, in sterile hospital settings, in dark rooms in the middle of the night, in noisy gatherings. Wherever we are, because He loves us with an everlasting love, God comes to meet us where ever we are at.

But the locked doors could not keep the risen Christ from entering the room. Our Gospel tells us that Jesus came and stood among them, with a greeting of peace, an expression that must have conveyed not just a calmness to the disciples' fear, but also an expression of forgiveness. Notice the first words out of the Jesus' mouth were peace be with you. Jesus came and brought a calming effect to the disciples. He brought peace. Jesus brought a peace that day and brings peace to us every day. He brought a peace that calmed the disciples so that they could indeed understand that Jesus was raised from the dead. Then Jesus showed them his hands and side, bearing the marks of his crucifixion and death, commissioned them for ministry, and empowered them for witness with the gift of his Spirit.

The place where Jesus meets us matters, not because of its beauty or simplicity, but because wherever it is, it is the place He comes to give us peace. True peace, peace of heart to quiet fears, peace of mind to still doubts, peace when there is turbulence in our families, peace when jobs are tenuous and health is fragile. When you do a dictionary search for the opposite of peace, you find words that are tinged by the effects of sin: discord, trouble, conflict, war, fighting, upheaval, anxiety, worry, life much as we know and sometimes live.

To quiet the disciples and us, Jesus reassured them, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives." Place and peace matter; and, so does presence, our presence. Because ten of the disciples were present in the locked room, they experienced Jesus' calming presence and heard His calming words of peace. But, who was missing? Thomas. So, when the disciples see

Thomas, they tell him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe." But fortunately, our Gospel does not end with Thomas' doubting denial of our Lord's resurrection. Thomas was there, gathered together with the other disciples in that same house, one week after our risen Lord first appeared to the others. He was there, amid the fellowship of that early church, still wrestling with his doubt, still struggling to believe, still open to the power of God's Spirit to bring him to faith.

Again, our risen Lord appeared to the disciples. Again, he greeted them with the words, "Peace be with you." Then he turned to Thomas and invited him to reach out and examine the marks of his crucifixion, turning his doubt into faith. And Thomas, the doubter, makes the most profound confession of faith in the entire Gospel of John, saying, MY LORD AND MY GOD! Jesus then responds to Thomas, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have come to believe."

These words of our risen Lord form the climax of John's Gospel. These words are intended for us, those of us who continue to carry on the Good News of our Lord's resurrection, as it has been handed down from those who were privileged to witness our risen Lord's presence, from generation to generation.

So let us place our doubts before God, and invite his Holy Spirit to enable us to believe the concluding words of John's Gospel: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name. Amen.

Let us pray: Dear Heavenly Father, the resurrection of your Son, Jesus the Christ, is the greatest news that the world has ever heard. It draws us into an ever-deepening relationship with you, gives us hope in the face of death, and the assurance of your forgiving grace for our repentant sins. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, grant that we might continue to grow in faith, confront our doubts, and witness to others of this tremendous gift of life that our Lord's resurrection reveals. This we ask in Christ's Holy name. Amen.

Benediction:

*May God bless you with open hearts to recognize the resurrected Christ in our midst and with the courage to reach out and touch the wounds of our neighbors, believing that we will find Resurrection in the meeting of our vulnerability. Amen.*