

Greetings to our members, those from United Congregational Church in Conway and all our friends at home,

This Easter Sunday marks the second one during the pandemic and hopefully the last Easter Sunday service recorded on YouTube. It has been a long, difficult year for our nation. Our congregation, while unable to remain open for worship or ministry, has been blessed in so many ways. We are now looking to open our church for in person worship later in May.

This Sunday is also a communion Sunday and the directions for participating in the sacrament are included in this Sunday's Worship Resource that is attached to this note.

Our Pastoral Search Committee is on a roll! The church profile is complete and ready to go. More importantly, an agreement between First Congregational Church and the United Congregational Church in Conway has been recommended by the Executive Committee and the Church Council. It is now in the process of being presented to the congregation for conversation and discernment. You will be receiving a letter concerning this process. Your participation in an upcoming church conversation and later a special meeting of the congregation is essential in moving our search for a new pastor further down the path.

Wishing you a bright and blessed Easter day!

Pastor Rob

Welcome to Easter Sunday Worship

April 4, 2021

Good Morning to our members, those from United Congregational Church in Conway and all our friends at home. This morning is Easter Sunday. Our morning worship remembers and celebrates the first Easter. This resource is being provided to offer a worship guide for your Easter morning celebration at home. An Easter Sunday video is available through the link provided in our weekly email and on our church web page, shelburnechurch.org.

This Sunday is a communion Sunday at First Congregational Church. If you wish to participate in communion please have two elements ready. First, a drink in a cup or glass. This could be juice of any kind or water. Second, a piece of bread of any kind.

If you are unable to access the Sunday video, you are welcome and encouraged to follow this resource on your own and celebrate Communion by reading the Communion prayers and serving yourself keeping in mind that even when alone, we are all a part of the body of Christ and our tradition holds to the priesthood of all believers.

And now let us be in worship

A Call to Worship (Responsive, L=Leader, P=People)

Hippolytus of Rome 190 -236

L Christ is risen;

P The spirits of evil are fallen

L Christ is risen;

P: The angels of God are rejoicing

L Christ is risen;

P Christ is risen indeed!

Unison Morning Prayer & the Lord's Prayer

Mothers Union

Loving God, in this moment, in our hearts, may we encounter afresh our risen Lord. Open our eyes. Give us a glimpse of Christ's resurrection glory. Wipe away our tears of mourning; fill us with joy in your presence. Take away our spirit of heaviness; clothe us with a garment of praise. And send us out to spread the news: The Lord is risen. Hope has been renewed; joy has been rekindled. Death has been defeated, eternity beckons. Hear this our prayer as Jesus taught saying, *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.*

Prayers of Easter

Our Easter prayer this morning is based on an Easter prayer written by Ted Loder.

It is a first-person prayer that offers up gratitude that from dead ends, comes new life in the light of Easter morning. Let us pray.

Gracious and loving God, creator of astonishing surprises as put a catch in my breath and add wings to my heart, on this Easter Sunday I praise you for this joy. This joy that is too great for words, though I try, but never too great for tears, and songs, for laughter and trumpets, for this mercy that blots out my betrayals and bids me to begin again, to limp on, to hop-skip and jump on, to mend what is broken both in me and around me and to forgive myself and to forgive those who have broken me, for this affirmation to life, new life, abundant life, this affirmation to love for this kingdom of yours, unleashed from the tomb unleashed in me, that there be no dead ends. No dead ends to growing into your kingdom. No dead ends to living the life you intend. No dead ends to your calls to be just, to making peace, to seek the truth and to dreaming dreams. No dead ends to being glad in my hearing the voice of my heart, in my prayers, in this moment, in this time of peaceful prayer and quiet meditation. (Personal prayer time)

Loving God, this resurrection, this Easter, born out of a place of dead ends, makes me see how great you are, and how full of grace. Christ is risen, your Christ is risen, to you be all honor, glory, and power. Amen.

Easter Gospel: John 20:1-18

All four Gospels tell the story of the resurrection of Christ. While they all agree on the resurrection, there are differences between them. Matthew, Mark, and John all have Mary Magdalene going to the tomb. Luke simply says, *the women*, without mentioning any names. Matthew and John both have Jesus saying something at the tomb. Mark and Luke leave any conversation out of their versions. Of

the two that have Jesus speaking only John has the touching narrative of Mary weeping. Our text for today may be read in unison or as a responsive lesson.

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.

Here ends the reading of the Gospel according to John. May God grant us wisdom and understanding. Please take a moment to reflect on this story of Easter morning. Give some thought to how this story has entered your life. A brief set of Easter notes are included at the end of the service.

After the reading the Easter Gospel you may reflect on this passage
and what Easter means for you.

The sermon for this text may be seen in this week's video.

Sermon: *From Dead Endings Comes New Life*

The Sacrament of Communion

The Invitation

In this holy Communion, in humble thanksgiving for the life, suffering and resurrection of our Lord, may we offer to Christ our whole being. In this holy Communion, may we be one in the mystical and universal Body of Christ, united in loving fellowship with God and with each other. In this holy Communion, may we see ourselves as one with humanity and a part of God's creation. In this holy Communion, may we remember with penitence and joy, Christ's great love for us, and his sacrifice for our redemption that has set us free. In this holy mystery, may we abide in Christ and may Christ abide in us.

The Prayer of Consecration

Lord, you left the grave, walked in the garden, revealed yourself to Mary, and came to your disciples. Death could not hold you. The prince of darkness was defeated. The God of creation acted through you, God's own son. Your disciples believed and then understood. You gave them the Holy Spirit, and they have made you known. Generation upon generation, has known of you since. Your love still reaches out. Your light pierces our darkness. Your truth makes us whole. Your love bursts into our lives. Your joy fills our needy souls. Your cup brings us salvation. Your body brings us healing. Your table welcomes us, all of us. And in gratitude we come. Amen.

Blessing of the Bread

On the night that Jesus was to be betrayed, he sat at table with all of his disciples. During the course of the meal, he took bread off the table. When he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." (You break your bread and eat)

Blessing of the Cup

Again, on that same night, Jesus took a cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. (You may drink from your cup)

Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving

Holy God, we are grateful, for your constant love for all you have made. We thank you for all that sustains life, for all people of faith in every generation and especially for Jesus Christ whom you sent in the fullness of time. We praise you for his birth, life, death and resurrection. We are grateful for calling forth your church that we might be your hands and feet in this world. In celebration on this day of resurrection we have come to his table that we may be restored to newness of life. Thanks be to you! Amen.

Benediction

Almighty and ever-living God,
give us new strength
from the courage of Christ,
to lead us in your ways of justice and peace.
Alleluia! Amen.