

Greetings members and friends of First Congregational Church of Shelburne,

Attached is the Easter Sunday morning worship resource. We hope to have a video of that service available on our web page, shelburnechurch.org. This week Russell Davenport went home to God after struggling with COVID 19. Please remember his wife, Martha, and all of his family this week. A service of celebration will be offered at a future date.

Today is Maundy Thursday. In years past we have gathered on this night to recall Jesus' arrest, trials and crucifixion. With the church closed, this important service will remain in darkness. I have attached a collection of readings that form the basis for the Office of Tenebrae. This collection is from all four Gospels and while it does not include every verse possible, it does give a concise and accurate picture of the passion. Included are moments for reciting the Lord's Prayer.

In working through service material this week, it occurred to me that this will be the first Easter Sunday that I am not in church. Growing up, my family always went to church on Easter Sunday. I was in one choir or another through High School. In college, my dorm was next to the chapel. Which made for an easy roll out of bed and into a back pew. In seminary, I served as a student minister in two congregations. After being ordained, Easter Sunday was one of the highlights of the church year. 39 Easters in 7 congregations. I always knew that one day I would not make it to an Easter Sunday service. I never expected that to happen due to a pandemic.

I am sure you have certain memories of Easter Sundays past. Traditions that are specific to your family, music you love to hear, hymns you joyfully sing and people you enjoy being with have become a part of your Easter celebration. Like Christmas, Easter is tinged with sadness when we recall those who are not with us. Great celebrations are like that. They are so important to us, that we miss those with whom we shared those moments with. Easter is unique among Christian festivals. It tells the story that love, God's love, is mightier than death. Even when we cannot celebrate together, God's love draws us together. May your Easter Sunday bring you fond memories, may you celebrate as you are able, and may the love of God touch you.

Pastor Rob

Welcome to Easter Sunday Worship April 12, 2020

Good Morning to our members and friends at home,

This morning is Easter Sunday. Our morning worship remembers and celebrates the first Easter Sunday morning. This resource is being provided to offer a worship guide for your Easter morning celebration. Our Easter prayer focuses on God's light offered in Jesus Christ. In preparation for this prayer you may light two, or more candles.

Easter Sunday: We regret that our Sunday morning worship continues to be suspended for the safety and health of our people and our community. We have recorded a modified Easter Sunday service in our sanctuary. It is available through our web page, www.shelburnechurch.org. This resource matches the order of the recorded service.

And now let us be in worship

A Call to Worship Hippolytus of Rome 190 -236

Christ is risen; The spirits of evil are fallen.

Christ is risen; The angels of God are rejoicing.
Christ is risen; Christ is risen indeed!

Morning Prayer & the Lord's Prayer

Church of Scotland

Lord Jesus Christ, we greet you. The cross has not defeated you. The grave has not kept you silent. At the first dew of the morning, you met our sister Mary, and called her by her name. We are your family and friends, and though numbed by your death and aware of our complicity in it, we come hesitantly but gladly, to confirm the rumor that you are alive. Meet us as you met Mary, with gentleness and resolution. Speak our names quietly in our hearts, that we may proclaim your name boldly on our lips as we prayer the prayer you did teach, 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.*

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.

Prayers of Easter

The following prayer is a series of petitions and intercessions that all begin with the same two verses and are linked together by similar endings. You may wish to say one and pause before moving onto the next. When the series concludes there is time for silent prayer and meditation.

Let us be in Prayer

We light these candles for you, Lord, on the day of your rising. Let their light scatter the darkness. May they remind us of your sacrifice. May they illuminate your path to the cross for us to see. May these candles bring to us the patient light of hope. May they join many other lights for those who wait in the hope of new life.

We light these candles for you, O Lord on the day of your rising. May their light scatter the darkness. May their flame be a symbol of your victory over death. May their burning be a sign of our faith. May they join many other lights in celebration of your resurrection.

We light these candles for you, Lord, on the day of your rising. May their light scatter the darkness. May they serve as prayers for those we love; our families and friends, those in peril, those who mourn, those in need of your healing touch, those who have gone before us, those who will come after us, men and women all the children. May they join many other lights in celebration of your love.

We light these candles for you, Lord, on the day of your rising. May their light scatter the darkness. May their flame protect the innocent in conflict; the children; boys and girls, their parents and neighbors, men and women, those who suffer the loss of home and community, loss of loved ones, loss

of food and clothing, loss of hope. May these burning flames be a symbol of our care. May they join many other lights in celebration of your compassion.

We light these candles for you, Lord, on the day of your rising. May their light scatter the darkness. May our lives be lights of peace to our world. May our lives always point to you, The Prince of Peace. May we seek your serenity in times of trial and times of rejoicing. Let these candles burn as sign of peace offered to you. May they join many other lights in celebration of your peace.

We light these candles for you, Lord, on the day of your rising. May their light scatter the darkness. May we come to you now with our prayers of thanksgiving and praise, our prayers of concern and intercession. We pray that your peace may fill us in this time of meditation.....
All blessings honor and power be unto you, your Christ and you Holy Spirit. Amen.

Benediction: Isaiah 43

*Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you.
I have called you by your name, you are mine.
When you go through deep waters and great trouble,
I will be with you.
When you go through rivers of difficulty,
you will not drown!
When you walk through the fire of oppression,
you will not be burned; the flames will not consume you.
For I am the Lord, your God.
Amen.*

Notes on the text

There are many ways we can reflect upon the event of Easter. We can focus on Mary Magdalene, or on the disciples. We can raise up the similarities between resurrection and the coming of Spring. We can consider what Jesus did and what the resurrection means. For this Easter, I have come to the conclusion that Easter is the story of how God, through Jesus, brings new life and new hope even in the darkest of places. It is that beautiful story of life being snatched from the grave. Of love being mightier than death. Given the pandemic that continues to have the world in its grip, this message takes on a more immediate tone. This immediacy and urgency has always been a part of human history. Our literary works, our art, our dramas all have the life from death plot. The Bible seems to have it as a central theme. Bringing new life and hope in the midst of chaos.

In recent times it has become a habit to include #44, the *Hallelujah Chorus* from Handel's *Messiah* in the Christmas portion of that work. I suspect, but do not know with certainty, that this is often done because of the sheer magnitude and familiarity of that chorus. Not to mention more performances of the Christmas portion take place than the Easter sections. I believe, with

a great level of certainty, that Handel understood the life of Christ, including the resurrection. When you review Handel's *Messiah* you will notice that in order to get to the *Hallelujah Chorus* you first go through the Air for Bass: *Why Do the Nations So Furiously Rage Together?* Then #41, the Chorus: *Let Us Break Their Bonds Asunder*, and finally two tenor solos: *He that Dwelleth in Heaven Shall laugh them to Sorn* and *Thou shalt break them*. Only then, after the dim, lonely, darkness of humanity. After the evil of the world is broken, dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel. After the work of Christ is complete. Only then, Is the *Hallelujah Chorus* sung. It is a chorus of faith. It tells, in very few words, some might say in one world, the culmination of all that God has done in Jesus Christ. That love is mightier than death.