

Worship Pages

Use these worship pages to guide your devotions or in place of Sunday worship. Beginning March 28, worship will be outside in the parking lot; you may attend in your car or sit outside. March 28-April 3, come to the church to use the Prayer Cross, tying a strip of cloth onto the cross as a sign of your prayers. On April 4, we will flower this cross during worship. As you worship with these pages, use the Prayer List in *The Friend* to keep the needs of our church in prayer. God is with you! -Pr. Liz

The Three Days: Maundy Thursday April 1, 2021

Read: Exodus 12:1–14; Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26; John 13:1–17, 31b–35

Reflection: This word about the love of Jesus is always the beginning of any time. By remembering the Passover and the Last Supper and the footwashing, we are not trying to get back to an old time. In the face of the suffering and death with which the world is filled, our trying would not come to much. But God’s word comes to us now. To our time. Even when we cannot meet for the holy supper together, this word — which takes these three nights to say — comes to us: Jesus Christ is our forgiveness. He is the Lamb whose blood marks the doors of our houses and bodies. In the power of the Spirit, he has washed our feet and our lives. And he turns us toward our neighbors. In this word — and in the cross proclaimed tomorrow and the resurrection proclaimed on Saturday night — Easter comes out to hold us already.

Prayer Holy God, source of all love, on the night of his betrayal, Jesus gave us a new commandment, to love one another as he loves us. Write this commandment in our hearts, and give us the will to serve others as he was servant of all, your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Three Days: Good Friday April 2, 2021

Read: Isaiah 52:13—53:12; Psalm 22; John 18:1 – 19:42

Reflection: Jesus Christ is a root out of dry ground. By his wounds we are healed. These paradoxes of Isaiah are echoed in the account in John about his death: he is arrested, yet when he speaks the soldiers fall down; he is tried, yet he is King and Son of God and The Man; he is thirsty and dying, yet he is the source of the Spirit and of water and blood to heal us; finally he is buried, but it is in a garden. All of this means to tell us that God shares our sorrow and need and death and yet transforms it to life and salvation and hope. More than just a root out of dry ground, his cross is the great tree of life in which we all may shelter. You may shelter there today. And all those things in all the world that we pray for today, God holds together in him.

The Bidding Prayer *After each bid, keep silence.*

Dear members of God’s family:

we pray for the church throughout the world. . .

we pray for our bishop, our pastor(s), our deacon(s), and all servants of the church. . .

we pray for those preparing for baptism. . .

we pray for the Jewish people, the first to hear the word of God. . .

we pray for those who do not share our faith in Jesus Christ. . .

we pray for those who do not believe in God. . .

we pray for God’s creation. . .

we pray for those who serve in public office. . .

we pray for those in any need. . .

and we pray for all afflicted by the coronavirus. . .

Finally, we pray:
Our Father, who art in heaven...
Conclude with these words:
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
By your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

The Three Days: Vigil of Easter April 3, 2021

Light a candle, saying:

The light of Christ, rising in glory, dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds.
O God, you are the creator of the world, the liberator of your people, and the wisdom of the earth. By the resurrection of your Son, free us from our fears, restore us in your image, and ignite us with your light, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Read: Genesis 1:1—2:4a; Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21; Ezekiel 37:1–14; Jonah 1:1—2:1; Daniel 3:1–29; John 20:1–18

Reflection: About this Gospel: Mary weeps; so do we. But do not weep. The Risen Christ calls each of us by name. And remember the other readings: he is rescue from the fire, restored vocation, our dry bones made alive, freedom from slavery and fear, and the very down payment on a new creation. Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Prayer: Eternal giver of life and light, this holy night shines with the radiance of the risen Christ. Renew your church with the Spirit given us in baptism, that we may worship you in sincerity and truth and may shine as a light in the world, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.
Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!
(The Three Days' liturgy and reflection from ELCA Worship Blog, reflection text by Gordon Lathrop)

Easter April 4, 2021

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Read: Acts 10:34-43, Psalm 118:1-2,14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Mark 16:1-8

Reflection: In our readings, we hear from a number of the witnesses of the resurrection: Peter, Paul, Mary Magdalene, Mary, and Salome. Encountering the resurrection changes each one of them. We hear from them at different time periods following the resurrection, and this contributes to their varying ability to put words to the revelation. The women, the first to hear the strange good news, are silent. The wonder overwhelms them. Perhaps it is not fair that we do not hear from them at intervals following their shock, when the words begin to spill out, when others also begin to believe, and much later, when the whole community is transformed by the gospel and the Spirit among them. We hear from Peter during a such later time, once tongues have been loosed for speaking. We hear from Paul much later, as one who has had plenty of time to develop a fuller understanding of what God has done in Jesus' resurrection, and has located his own place in God's work. Notice the development that these three sets of witnesses represent. The church changes as it embraces the good news. God continues to transform the community; it doesn't happen all at once. You, and our church, are also being transformed by the good news that Jesus is risen. Just like the disciples before us, we're still working to figure out what this means for the way we live our own lives and the way we live as

church. Take some time this week to sketch out your own faith biography. In what ways have you and your faith grown and changed? What events have led to the most growth? When has the promise of Jesus sharing his resurrection with us been the most meaningful? Jesus is risen: we continue to live into the joy of that good news.

Prayer: God of mercy, we no longer look for Jesus among the dead, for he is alive and has become the Lord of life. Increase in our minds and hearts the risen life we share with Christ, and help us to grow as your people toward the fullness of eternal life with you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

April 11, 2021

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Read: Acts 4:32-35, Psalm 133, 1 John 1:1-2:2, John 20:19-31

Reflection: In Acts, we hear a surprising description of the new Christian community. All things were held in common, and “there was not a needy person among them.” I am often challenged by this description of the community. I wonder how it could be, and if it could ever be replicated now. Even if this type of shared lifestyle was the way things were for a moment in Christian history, it doesn’t seem like it was sustainable. After all, if living in the light of Jesus’ resurrection leads people to do whatever it takes to ensure no one lives in need, well, we wouldn’t be where we are today, would we? Driving around town, I’m struck by how many people are standing with signs asking for help. I’ve toured the CHUM shelter, so I can easily imagine it filled in the night. Have we lost the urgency of connecting the good news of Jesus’ resurrection to the raising up of those who suffer right now? I wonder when the shift happened, from witnessing to the gospel by meeting immediate needs to focusing on heaven as the end of current suffering. That shift relieves us from responsibility. The church doesn’t have to do the hard work of working change in the current worldly systems if all we need to do is get people to believe in heaven and wait for it. Consider the apostle Thomas. He missed out on seeing Jesus on his first post-resurrection visit. He wanted to see the signs that this resurrection was true. Imagine the world as Thomas. How will we show that the resurrection is true today? I think working towards a society in which “there was not a needy person among them” would certainly catch people’s attention. They might just be curious enough to want to know about this resurrected Jesus and how he could inspire such change.

Pray: Almighty God, with joy we celebrate the day of our Lord’s resurrection. By the grace of Christ among us, enable us to show the power of the resurrection in all that we say and do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

April 18, 2021

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Read: Acts 3:12-19, Psalm 4, 1 John 3:1-7, Luke 24:36b-48

Reflection: If there’s one phrase we hear repeated in the Gospel of Luke, it’s “do not be afraid.” We hear it six times, spread throughout the Gospel, as angels or Jesus himself invite people to join in a new thing God is doing. Mary and Joseph both hear these words as an angel invites them to parent the Son of God. Jesus speaks these words as he invites his first disciples to leave their past lives and

join him. Jesus repeats them to the crowds as he teaches about the kingdom of God and invites people into the new life of the kingdom. Although it's not exactly the same, I'm going to include today's gospel in this theme. Jesus appears to the disciples after his death and resurrection, inviting, "peace be with you." It's a greeting akin to "do not be afraid," and with good reason, after all, we're not used to people returning from the dead. Consider, when angels or Jesus speak these words of reassurance, they are paired not only with the frightful vision of a messenger from God, but also with an invitation for a changed life. After Jesus' resurrection, the disciples need to leave behind the safety of their locked room, their nostalgia for the days of ministering with Jesus, and their desire to return to their previous lives. They need to step out in faith, trusting that God will meet them in the new and unknown future. That's a pretty big ask. In this Easter season, we remember that first Easter as we also consider how Jesus' resurrection changes our lives today. Picture Jesus standing in front of you with the invitation, "peace be with you; do not be afraid." What future is Jesus inviting you into? What things: patterns, addictions, fears, expectations, do you need to leave behind? Jesus will be there in the new future he is preparing for you. May God give you the courage to move forward.

Pray: Holy and righteous God, you are the author of life, and you adopt us to be your children. Fill us with your words of life, that we may live as witnesses to the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

April 25, 2021

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Read: Acts 4:5-12, Psalm 23, 1 John 3:16-24, John 10:11-18

Reflection: Out of all the passages of the Bible, Psalm 23 is one of the most recognizable. Since the 1800s, it's become popular in Western Christianity, and often used in funerals. Yet its focus is very much on life today. I read a commentary by Dr. Brent Strawn who rather bluntly reminded readers, as he considered the images of shepherd and host, "Neither image concerns death; indeed, shepherds want to keep their sheep alive, as do hosts their guests! This same point is underscored by the excessive and abundant way God's care (whether as shepherd or host) is described in the psalm." This is a psalm of trust, meant to help us when we feel the shadows pressing in around us, and the pathway before us is unclear or impassable. When have you had to walk in the dark? Times that stick out in my mind include walking the dark mall parking lot after working the closing shift at Younkers, keys threaded through my fingers as if that was going to fend off any would-be attacker. They include nights at Camp Amnicon, walking back from the washroom to my little sleeping shed, carefully crossing a footbridge in the dark. On those nights, I would sing to myself to scare away anything lurking in the woods; I'd imagine porcupines and bears running away with paws over their ears. In the shadows, we can imagine all sorts of dangers, likely or not, creeping close enough to threaten. Psalm 23 reminds us we are not alone in the dark. Jesus travels with us. Holding on to that promise gives us the courage to see more clearly. There's plenty to fear, but knowing Jesus is with us tempers that fear, so that we can function. We can be real about the dangers, but also faithful in our trust, so that we continue to live without being held captive to fear. Fear can make people do horrible things. Jesus frees us from fear. Jesus shepherds us through life.

Pray: O Lord Christ, good shepherd of the sheep, you seek the lost and guide us into your fold. Feed us, and we shall be satisfied; heal us, and we shall be whole. Make us one with you, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.