



## **WORSHIPPING AT HOME**

*with UCC Westerly  
during the Covid-19 outbreak*

**April 12, 2020  
EASTER SUNDAY!**

- Create a small worship space in your home anywhere. Add a candle, a bible and perhaps a lily or daffodil or tulip to get that Easter feel.
- At 9:30am, the time we would usually gather in our sanctuary, settle into your worship space and begin...
- A reminder I will be streaming our worship service on Facebook Live beginning at 9:45am. You can still access it even if you are not on Facebook by going to the church website, [www.uccwesterly.org](http://www.uccwesterly.org), and clicking on the Facebook icon on the homepage.

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### **Light your candle as a reminder of God's presence with you**

**Gathering Music** performed by Doug Brummund (*NOTE: Doug's original music is copyrighted and may not be reproduced in any form without his written permission. We are so grateful he has granted that permission to us for our use with these At Home Worship resources.*)

### **THE ANCIENT EASTER GREETING**

**One:** Christ is risen!

**All:** Christ is risen indeed!

### **Opening Song – “Christ the Lord is Risen Today”**

1. *Christ the Lord is risen today, Allelulia!  
Earth and heaven in chorus say, Allelulia!  
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Allelulia!  
Sing ye heavens and earth reply, Allelulia!*
2. *Love's redeeming work is done, Allelulia!  
Fought the fight, the battle won, Allelulia!  
Death in vain forbids him rise, Allelulia!  
Christ has opened paradise, Allelulia!*
3. *Soar we now where Christ has led, Allelulia!  
Following our exalted Head, Allelulia!  
Made like him, like him we rise, Allelulia!  
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Allelulia!*

## WORDS OF WELCOME

### CALL TO WORSHIP:

One: Jesus walked the earth with God's message of peace, blessing all creation;

**All: Abundant life for all!**

One: Jesus preached God's love – justice for the poor, full sharing of earth's bounty.

**All: He rattled the authorities with hope and healing, forgiveness and welcome!**

One: Worldly powers tried to stop him: led him to a tree and crucified him; laid him in the earth, a garden tomb.

**All: Three days in the earth, and then, like the seed which dies to live, so Jesus arose to new life!**

One: Let us celebrate the risen Christ, alive in our midst this day and every day.

**All: May we be the hands and feet and voice of the risen Christ, proclaiming the good news of abundant life for all.**

One: Alleluia! Christ is risen!

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

### UNISON PRAYER OF REFLECTION

**Gracious and Loving God, we give thanks for this amazing day! The impossible becomes possible as we behold the empty tomb. Hope is reborn as we risk embracing the unbelievable. On this Easter morning, we celebrate that the darkness is not quite so dark as we stand before the empty tomb. Yet we confess we are still unsure what it all means. Holy One, soften our hearts and open our minds that doubt and fear will retreat. Renew us, body, mind and soul, in the shimmering newness of this Easter morning so that we may live each day as your beloved. We pray as always in the name of your Son, the Risen Christ Jesus. Amen.**

### SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 24:1-12

**Easter Message** “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” Rev. Ruth

### **Song of Response:** *“The Day of Resurrection”*

- 1. 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 hath brought us over, with hymns of victory.*
- 2. Our hearts be pure from evil, that we may see aright  
The Lord in rays eternal of resurrection light;  
And listening to his accents, may hear so calm and plain,  
His own “All hail!” and, hearing, may raise the victor strain.*
- 3. Now let the heavens be joyful! Let earth the song begin!  
Let the round world keep triumph, and all that is therein!  
Let all things seen and unseen their notes in gladness blend,  
For Christ the Lord hath risen, our joy that hath no end.*

## **A Time of Prayer**

- If you are joining in the prayers during the Facebook Live broadcast, before worship take a few minutes to jot down your own list of prayer concerns. Send them to me via text, email or Facebook message at least 20 minutes before the service begins.
- If you are using this worship resource on your own, after making your list of prayer concerns, sit in silence and let your mind calm down. When you are ready, aloud or just in your own mind, ask God to bless each of the persons and situations on your list.
- End with the Lord's Prayer.

## **Closing Song – “Come, Ye Faithful Raise the Strain”**

1. *Come ye faithful, raise the strain of triumphant gladness;  
God hath brought forth Israel into joy from sadness;  
Loosed from Pharaoh's bitter yoke Jacob's sons and daughters,  
Led them with unmoistened foot through the Red Sea waters.*
2. *‘Tis the spring of souls today; Christ hath burst his prison,  
And from three days sleep in death as a sun hath risen;  
All the winter of our sins, long and dark, is flying  
From his light, to whom we give laud and praise undying.*
3. *“Allelulia!” now we cry to our King immortal,  
Who, triumphant, burst the bars of the tomb's dark portal;  
“Allelulia!” with the Son, God the Father praising,  
“Allelulia!” yet again to the Spirit raising.*

## **A Prayer of Benediction**

*May the God of peace be with you, stilling the heart that hammers with fear and doubt and confusion. And may the warm mantle of your peace cover those who are troubled and anxious. May the blessing of peace be on you and in you every moment of the week ahead. Amen.*

**Ending Music** performed by Doug Brummund. See note above.

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## **VIRTUAL FELLOWSHIP TIME!**

- If you have access to a computer, tablet or an iPhone with a camera, you can join us for a Zoom Fellowship time by clicking on the link below at 11am. You will be able to see and chat with folks and they will be able to see and chat with you. Here is your invitation to the gathering:

Ruth Hainsworth is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Sunday Fellowship

Time: Apr 5, 2020 11:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/387873891?pwd=UUNoaVltbjJMWU1naWh4QzZoWEUxZz09>

Meeting ID: 387 873 891

Password: 012305

**Easter Message**    *“Why do you look for the living among the dead?”*    Rev. Ruth

Our question to ponder this morning is the final one of our Lenten series on exploring the questions of Jesus. The thing about this question, though, is that it was not a question posed by Jesus. Instead, as our text in Luke points out, it is asked by “two men in dazzling clothes” who confront the women arriving at the tomb to anoint the dead body of Jesus. They then quickly explained why Jesus was not there: “He is not here, but has risen.” Then they remind the women what Jesus had told them and the disciples earlier: “Remember how he told you ... that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.”

Whatever you think of these two men in dazzling clothes, their question remains as relevant today as it was on that morning almost two millennia ago. Perhaps even more so today as we find ourselves in a situation literally unthinkable even as Lent was beginning. The Coronavirus, or Covid-19 if we’re using its technical name, blew away our lives almost overnight. We heard hints of it in the news as it first surfaced in China months ago, but it seemed so far away, totally removed from our lives and daily routines. Yet, here we are now – exactly 30 days in to a complete lock-down of our lives where everything has been upended in virtually every conceivable way. Every aspect of our lives is completely different and we never saw it coming until it was on top of us. The economy is crashing as service industries, manufacturers and retailers of all sizes close their doors and lay off thousands, even millions, across the country. Schools have found a way to go completely virtual in miraculous fashion and families have rediscovered the good, the bad and the ugly of what it is to spend long hours with their children and spouses. Those who are still working are doing so from home or in the medical or service industries, jobs which put them on the front lines of this dreaded and deadly disease literally putting their own lives on the line just by going to work each day. The whole thing is truly overwhelming and, frankly, unbelievable. Yet here we are.

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?” This question has a whole new feel to it when we watch the nightly news on television. Just the other night, the lead story was dead bodies being wheeled out of hospitals in NYC and placed in refrigerated trucks for safe-keeping until final arrangements can be made. Dead bodies stored temporarily in the cold, dark tombs of refrigerated trucks. This, dear ones, is our reality right now. People are dying from a disease no one knew about a few short months ago as summer turned to fall, and then fall gave way to winter. People are dying in numbers we can’t even wrap our heads around. And so many more are seriously ill at risk of dying. And those caring for them face death by doing so. Plus, we are told over and over again that we must stay home to “flatten the curve” of infection. We must risk economic ruin because the only way to save our loved ones is to prevent infection in the first place. We are told that not doing so, not staying out of stores and public parks, means we are putting our own beloveds at risk of the very death we are witnessing on the news every night. “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” Because sometimes we can’t tell the difference anymore?

Dear Ones, in this awful and seemingly unending journey through the Valley of Covid-19 confronting us every waking moment of every day, we must turn how we

understand this question on its ear. We must upend our vision of it and of this Covid-19 reality in the light of the Easter message of new life always possible with the Risen Christ as our guardian and guide. That message is simple: Christ is Risen. Christ is Risen indeed. And this incredible, miraculous Risen Christ walks with us through every day, through every crisis, reminding us that the scary moments of life are just that – moments. Joy comes in the morning. New life comes in the midst of death and despair. We must stop looking for the living among the dead so prominently featured in the continual news cycle. The dead are there, surely. But they are not the end of the story. They are not the end of life for all of us or even some of us. Yes, some lives ended tragically, unexpectedly and, for many, far too soon. But in their death new life still emerges. New understanding of the disease, how to treat it and prevent it, moves forward constantly. And just as important, new realizations of what is so desperately wrong with our society dominated by the haves and have-nots are visible in ways they never would have been without the dead so very visible among the living. Our collective comprehension now emerging in the midst of so much death that we literally cannot store all the bodies reveals all too clearly the many, many limitations in our society that led to so many who are seriously ill, so many who will die before their time.

But, dear ones, we cannot get stuck in this despair and horror. We MUST stop looking for the living *among* the dead! Instead we must start looking for, engaging with the living among the living. The fear of death, the images of death, the warnings of death coming at us all the time are terrifying. Yes, perhaps they are needed as reminders of how important it is to cooperate with the shelter in place orders and all the bizarre and annoying realities that come with it. We must see and celebrate the living as we maintain our 6 feet of safe space. We must regard the arrows on the floors of the grocery stores and pharmacies as roadmaps into the sweet land of the living we so miss because by doing our part – adhering to the incredibly simple request to stay home and keep your distance and wash your hands – we will hasten our own return to that which we seek. Life – new life – at the end of this long, difficult, worrisome and challenging journey.

This Easter, beloved people of the Risen Christ, dare to set aside this overwhelming desire to look for the living among the dead. They are not there. The dead may be potent warning to what we must be doing to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe, but they cannot shape the contours of our lives. We must entrust them into God's eternal care and then reach for the hands of the Risen Christ, he who is risen indeed. He is here ready to walk with us, guide us every step on this journey we never chose to make through the Valley of Covid-19. He who defeated death itself on this Easter morning tells us just by being himself that we are not to be afraid. Instead we are to invest our energies and ourselves into caring for the least of these whoever that might be in this moment. The hungry are still hungry. The homeless are still homeless. The sick are still sick even if it's not with Coronavirus. Dear Ones, the Risen Christ bids us to come out of our own tombs on this morning, to stop looking for the living among the dead and instead to become renewed in the life that is life through the Risen Christ we celebrate this Easter morning. Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Happy Easter. Amen.