

This service is intended to lead us from uncertainty to discovery to joyful hope.

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

As we gather in the name of Jesus we remember and acknowledge with gratitude the Lkwungen people – the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ – on whose traditional and unceded territory we gather. As we remember let us also recommit to reconciling relationships.

➤ *Were you there (verses 1 and 5)*

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John 20: 1–2

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."*

Reflection: *Edging into Easter – Part One*

In the opening scene, it is still dark. The gospel writers do not rush us into Easter. Mary Magdalene sees that the stone blocking Jesus' tomb has been rolled away. Something has happened. This she knows for sure. But what it is, she cannot yet say. *"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him."*

Easter opens with a puzzle. With Jesus' friends and followers, we must edge our way toward the truth. Truth is something precious. God will pull back the curtains on truth for us but often we must wait for truth to emerge. The most important truth for our lives begins in mystery.

On Easter morning while it is still dark, we wait for the truth of our future to become clear.

God of mystery, we have made it here on Easter morning, seeking to find you. We *know* the Easter story, yet we do not always *understand* what is happening. When your truth is not yet clear to us, give us courage to keep seeking that truth. So may our hearts learn to sing your Easter promise...

Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again!

Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again!

John 20: 3–10

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.

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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.

Reflection: *Edging into Easter – Part Two*

Just like a pair of athletes on the same team, Peter and John compete with each other to find out the truth first. At least we assume it's John with Peter. This storyteller does like puzzles. This "other" disciple runs the fastest. He wins the race—as if it's a race for disciples to show our loyalty to Jesus.

But he cannot find the courage to do anything more than peek into the empty tomb. Do we blame him? Few of us look into a grave eagerly.

Then Peter arrives, a little out of breath, and edges past John. Is he impatient? Determined not to lose his courage? Eager to show up his friend?

Peter enters the tomb; sees the bandages rolled up, tossed aside. Then John has to squeeze in beside him. He doesn't want Peter to know something he doesn't know. *"And he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand that Jesus must rise from the dead."*

The puzzle continues.

What *did* John *believe* if they did not understand that Jesus would rise from the dead? What we *believe* and what we *understand* are not exactly the same thing when it comes to Easter. There will always be a tension between what we believe and what we can understand.

What we believe, we take on trust because we cannot fully explain it. We cannot fully explain Easter morning. So there will always be a mystery to draw us to the empty tomb one more time. And we have to take it on trust that the world, our world, was changed that day. We have to take it on trust that God's love is afoot in our lives once again.

God of mystery, we confess that faith doesn't come easy every Easter. We know the Easter story, but we do not understand *how* things happened as that day dawned. Help us trust the faith of those who first believed. Ease our doubts and fill our hearts with faith that blossoms in hope...

Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again!

Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again!

John 20: 11–16, 18a

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).

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "*I have seen the Lord*"

Reflection: *Edging into Easter – Part Three*

The picture of Mary weeping in the garden is very moving. All of us who have been touched by grief can feel what she's going through—the sorrow, the confusion, the feeling of despair. She sees Jesus and she doesn't even recognize him. So often grief *is* disorienting. We can't remember things; a familiar name just disappears from our lips.

In her grief and uncertainty, Mary starts to argue with the gardener. Her grief edges into anger that the body of her beloved Jesus has disappeared. "*Sir, tell me where you've laid him. I will take him away.*"

She's saying, "*He belongs to me. I want him back.*"

Mary's grief and loss echo at the heart of John's Easter story. She speaks of our grief and loss, and of our anxiety, which can edge into anger when we're at a loss for words. When we're sad or anxious, when it's hard to see any joy on the horizon, we can only edge into Easter.

In one sense, this year we are edging into Easter. The weeks and months of pandemic drag on. Threats from new variants are alarming and we can't be sure just what hope we can put in vaccines. Some feel anxious because further lockdowns cause their own kinds of loss and grief.

None of us is sure what next Easter will look like. But in truth, we never know exactly what comes next. And so we have to take it on trust that Easter will come again, with its puzzles and its promise.

We have to take it on trust that our future is in God's hands. We have to take on trust that the love which changed the world that first Easter will continue to shape and reshape our world. For just at the most anxious moment in the story, Jesus speaks. "Mary."

He calls her name. How do you hear it?

Mary, don't you recognize me? (disappointed tone)

Mary, don't be so sad. I'm here with you. (tender tone)

Come on, Mary, it's me, Jesus. (challenge in the tone)

We could hear that name said in a dozen different ways, depending how we have edged into this Easter morning.

Hear that name spoken as a gift—a gift of Jesus' love for Mary, a gift of their deep friendship. For friendship embraces all those anxious moments we are facing just now. Friendship will bring tenderness and challenge into our lives to call out the best in us.

The Risen Christ edges into our lives in friendship to receive us as we are in our grief and uncertainty, in our hope and commitment, to call out the best in us. To assure us we can take it on trust that Christ *is* risen. And that we can face our future unafraid. It is in the hands of the Risen Lord.

So now imagine yourself in that garden. Listen as Jesus speaks your name...

How will he say it? With a smile? In tenderness? With a challenge?

Jesus speaks our names to reassure us, to encourage us, to dare us to be his witnesses. Hear him speak your name today in friendship as we proclaim with Mary: ***I have seen the Lord!***

God of mystery, we *know* the Easter story and we are *glad* to be caught up in its joy. You call each of us by name because you love us. So, may we live our love for you gladly and with Easter joy...

Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again!

Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again!

Easter Liturgy

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen, indeed!

He was dead and now he lives.

Hallelujah, Christ is risen!

The tomb is empty. He was dead and now he lives. The journey begins again. Come, let us follow him. And let us start the new journey with prayer... **God of life, you came to us and you redeem all things. And now we give ourselves to you and continue your work of good news and reconciliation in the world. Give us the strength to follow you on the mission you have called us to. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen**

➤ *Were you there (verses 6)*

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PWS&D Sharing **Rejoice! Christ is risen!**

Inspired by God's promise of abundant life, our church answers God's call to serve those in need with compassion, love and justice. Every day we work to serve the hungry, the poor and the displaced. With your support, we are reflecting God's love by responding to the world's most distressed and marginalized communities. We are acting to provide sustainable agricultural skills, educational opportunities, support for refugees, and access to health care around the world. Together, we are helping communities overcome poverty, recover from emergencies and provide hope for the future. Faithful to our calling, we respond together. Thank you for your continuing support of PWS&D this Easter and throughout the year.

Celebrations / Joys and Concerns

God's blessing on you. God's blessing on you.

God's blessing, dear friends. God's blessing on you.

Remembering our Alleluias!

As a symbolic expression of the season of Lent we wrote 'alleluia' on some ribbons and papers and put them away until today. Now let us bring them out and say with conviction ALLELUIA! Christ is Risen – Christ is Risen indeed!

† Offering and Prayer

On Easter Day, we celebrate God's most precious gift to us in Christ's dying and his rising. As we present our gifts to God this morning, may our generosity reflect God's goodness to us, and the hope we have in Christ Jesus, our Risen Lord.

God of Resurrecting Hope, we thank you with grateful hearts, recognizing how much you have given us in Christ, and what his gift has cost. Bless the gifts we bring so they may help spread the hope and joy we feel today in the world you love so dearly. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

➤ *Jesus Christ is risen today*

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Gathering at the Lord's Table

On this Easter day, we come to the table to remember our future with our Risen Lord. We remember Jesus declared that people will come from east and west and north and south to sit at table in God's kingdom. Remember—the Risen Christ has spread this joyful feast for you. The gifts we bring to his table are for all those who love him and for all who want to love him more. Taste and see that God is good.

The Story of the Table

When we gather at this table, we remember how this meal began, how it has promised hope and new life to Jesus' friends from one generation to the next.

Often, when we gather, we remember bread and wine shared around a table one solemn, holy night. Today we remember another day, the first Easter day, when Jesus appeared to friends along a road. But they were too sad and tired to recognize him. So, he came to the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

Then their eyes were opened; *then* they recognised him.

As we break this bread and share this cup in the name of our Risen Lord, may our eyes be opened to recognize Jesus present with us—here and now. And as Jesus offered thanks for the gifts of the earth, let us also bless God for what we are about receive.

† The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

With hearts lifted high, O God, we offer our gifts to you on this joyful Easter Day, for we have seen your grace and power, rolling away the stone of sorrow and despair, bursting from the tomb in the gift of new life. And so, we join our voices with all creatures high and low, with all the saints who have gone before us, and with those who sit beside us and all around us, to raise the song of your unending goodness and greatness...

O holy, holy, holy God, O God of time and space. All earth and sea and sky above bear witness to your grace. Hosanna in the highest heav'n, creation sings your praise. And blessed is the one who comes and bears your name always!

O Christ, our Risen Lord, receive our praise and joy this day. Your resurrection promises that there are new possibilities for us and our weary world. Even when we falter in discouragement at the daily news, even if we hesitate at the good news that your great love has come back to embrace us, you do not abandon us.

You call us by name to assure us of your love and invite us to join you now as your friends. You have spread this table for us with gifts of bread and wine so that we may taste your love and grace, meant to bless and heal us. And so we proclaim our faith and our hope as we sing...

Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again!

Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again!

Spirit of Life, rising in us and around us this Easter Day, breathe upon us now and upon this bread and wine. So may they become for us Christ's body and life blood, to nourish us with the gift of new life in Christ. As this bread and wine become a part of us, may we become a part of you, Lord Jesus, and your work of healing this hurting world. Help us trust that all things will work together for good through the power of love that raised you from the dead, the power of the great love we share in your name.

Amen, amen, O Holy One! Hosanna and amen! Amen, amen, O Holy One! Hosanna and amen!

Jesus took bread, broke it and said, ***this is my body, broken for you. Do this to remember me.***

He also took the cup of wine and said, ***this cup is the new relationship with God made possible because of my death. Drink from it, all of you.***

Sharing Bread and Wine

The One who was sealed in the tomb has been raised from death for our sake and is present with us in the bread of life.

The Christ whose wounded hands bear the marks of our sorrow and pain now reaches out to us in the cup of joy.

The bread of life – the cup of joy – we remember and share with thanksgiving these gifts in which God comes to us so that we may come to God.

Everyone consumes the elements in their own space...

† Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you have nourished us with bread broken and wine poured out to strengthen us for our journey. And you have put your Spirit into our hands to take your peace with us wherever we go. You rise in us in spite of all that challenges us within our own lives and in the world you love. You rise in us to mend our broken hearts and put us back together again so that we can befriend the world and make peace for all God's people in your name. Send us out as your witnesses to share your peace and your grace with hope and humility for your sake. We boldly pray for our daily bread as you taught us...

➤ *Our Father in heaven (The Lord's Prayer – no repeats)* **469**

Blessing

Go from this time of worship renewed and strong, knowing that the Lord is alive and present. Look for the blessings that await you this week. Weep with those who weep – rejoice with those who celebrate. And may the truth of the empty tomb – the hope of resurrection – keep you fearless and sure each day. The grace of Jesus Christ, the love of our Creating God, and the nurturing community of the Holy Spirit embrace us all. Amen

➤ *Joyful, joyful we adore you* **410**