

The sanctuary is dark at the beginning. Lighting may be added gradually as the drama progresses - full lighting is needed at the end of the dramatic reading.

Entry of the Scriptures

John 20:1-18 [NT 114]

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.

*That Great Getting' Up Morning*¹

➤ *Play taps.* (Narrator, Mary, and Peter take their places and solemnly sing...

*Day is done. Gone the sun, from the lake, from the hills, from the sky.
All is well. Safely rest. God is nigh.*

Peter God is nigh? I guess so.
 God is supposed to be nigh.
 Isn't that what we've all been taught?
 "Through thick and thin, God is nigh!"

 I cannot sing: *"All is well."*
 I will not sing it.
 All is not well. Not well at all.
 Jesus is dead... executed... murdered.
 The best person I ever knew...
 He is dead,
 And I let it happen.
 I was so cocky and confident.
 I swore to him, *"You can count on me."*

¹ *That Great Getting' Up Morning*, The Next Voice You Hear, David Steele, Geneva Press 1999, pages 93-102.

I knew he was in trouble.
I promised I would protect Jesus.
I was so certain I could see him through.
But I couldn't. I didn't.
They killed him.
And I never lifted a finger...

Narrator All is well, Peter. God is nigh.

Peter All my life, since I was a kid,
I've yearned for *"All is well, God is nigh."*
I've always wanted my life to matter.
I remember as a child, lying under the skies at night,
Looking up at the stars,
I felt then God was nigh.
I knew then that God, somehow, some way, knew I was there.
I wanted my "being there," "being here," to matter...
To God... to other people... to myself!

Oh, I had dreams of doing great things for God back then.
But as time went on,
It became obvious,
My place in life was to be a fisherman,
Like Dad.
"Well, all right," I said, *"I'll be the best dang fisherman God ever made."*
And I was!

Then Jesus came to me... called me...

Narrator *"Come, Peter, join me.
We'll fish for people!
Come help me build the kingdom."*

You matter, Peter... to Jesus.
He said to you,
"On rocks like you, Peter, I build my church."

Peter How I wanted to be that rock.
I wanted to be solid – firm – dependable – I wanted to matter.

But it didn't work out that way.

It's like my friend, the firefighter.

I was kidding him one day about his soft job.

He and his buddies sit around the firehouse most of the time,
Playing games, polishing the equipment, eating gourmet meals...

"Soft job," I said.

"Yes and no," he answered.

*"There comes a moment when a child is trapped,
The flames are about to reach her,
And what I do in the next few seconds
May mean life or death for her
I am trained to act in emergencies.
The city pays me for sitting around,
Just so I can be there at the moment that child needs help."*

He's right, of course.

We gladly pay his salary

So, he can be there at that crucial moment.

Well... my moment came – and I denied – denied Jesus.

Peter, the rock, turned into sand.

Jesus was counting on me – and I let him down.

I wanted my life to matter...

It doesn't!

➤ *Play the last three lines of taps*

Mary

So now you know you don't matter, Peter.

Welcome to the club.

If you had been born a girl,

You'd have known that long ago.

We don't matter. We are a convenience.

They teach us how to cook and sew,

To keep a spotless house,

How to clean a fish and kill a chicken.

Then later on we learn just how to please a man.

I learned well.

A woman can make good money

When she knows what men want.
They'll pay for their convenience
But that's what we are – a convenience.
We don't matter.

Narrator Then you met Jesus, Mary.

Mary Yes, and I was no longer a convenience.
Not to him! No one was.
When he looked at me – or talked with me,
I became somebody... a person... Mary!
It was not what I did or what I said.
It was me, Mary... Mary was important.
I found love with him.
And it was so different from what I had called love.
We really ought to have another word for what Jesus was, and what he
called forth in us. I guess love is the best we can do.

But the word is so tainted...
Love does not seem big enough,
Not big enough to describe what we found in him... and he in us.
Jesus knew me – spoke my name – cared.
And I understood love.

Narrator Safely rest, Mary. God is nigh.

Mary Is God nigh?
There is no safe rest...
A convenience knows too well.
When they are through with you,
They go off and leave you alone,
Tossing and turning through the long nights.
A convenience knows it is not safe...
There is no rest.

I thought his love would be different.
Love never ends, they say.
Oh, yes, it does!
The love of Jesus was too good for us.

The world cannot stand such love.
Love like his is killed, smothered, snuffed out... by death.

I loved... I lost.
Death won.
I toss and turn at night... alone.
Neither safe nor at rest.

➤ *Play the last three lines of taps*

Narrator God is nigh?
Get up, Mary.
Leave your troubled sleep, neither safe nor restful.
Pack up your spices,
And visit your loneliness.
Visit love in death's prison.
Notice the tomb, Mary.
Run, call Peter.
Tell him to bring his despair and come.
The rock is rolled away!
The tomb is empty.
He is not here!
Stand, Peter... Wonder, Mary.
Jesus is not here!

➤ *Play the first four notes of reveille.*

Narrator Something is up.
Imagine the worst, Peter.
We all do.

Peter They've stolen his body!

Narrator Something is up.
Run off, Peter.

Stay, Mary, in that garden... wondering...
Embrace your loneliness.
Now... notice you are not alone.

Over there, standing in front of the rising sun...
See... someone is with you.
The gardener! It must be the gardener!

Mary Sir, did you carry Jesus away?
Where is his body?
I wish to care for him.

Narrator Mary!

Mary Teacher!

➤ *Play the first seven notes of reveille.*

Narrator Something is up!
Someone is up!
Run, Mary! Find Peter!
Tell him... tell the others... share the news!
Something is up!
Someone is up!

Mary I have seen the Lord!

Narrator Christ is risen!
You matter, Peter.
Your life matters.
He will show you how and where.
Put away your despair.

Christ is risen!
The grave does not snuff out love, Mary.
He will show you – how to go on loving – how to live in love
You need clutch your loneliness no longer.

Christ is risen!
Spread the news, Peter, Mary.
Tell the disciples, tell the others.
Tell us all
Who walk in darkness,

Who are alone
And in despair
Tell us bored ones,
Tell us who are giving up.
Spread the news.
Something is up!
Someone is up!

Mary and Peter *go through the aisles, whispering:*
Christ is risen... Christ is risen, indeed.

As they reach the doorway, they shout:
Get up!
Get up, people of Knox – people of Victoria! Get up!
Christ is risen!
Christ is risen, indeed!

Narrator It's that great gettin' up morning, friends.
Christ is risen,
And we are called to get up
To get up and be with him.

➤ *Play all of reveille.*

➤ *Jesus Christ is risen today*

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Call to Worship / Lent Liturgy

Words of faith's story help celebrate this day of resurrection:

God creates a new heaven and a new earth, be glad and rejoice!

God's steadfast love endures forever; the Lord has become our salvation.

The stone was rolled away—he is not here, he is risen.

We say with joy: Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

† Gathering Prayer / Words of Hope (Colossians 3:1-4)

*"Unless a grain falls into the earth and dies,
it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."*

Now we know, O Christ, what you meant. Today we celebrate the bounty of your rising, and the pure fire of your love. Earth itself is blessed to have been your tomb. The love that kept you on the cross and the love that raised you from the dead cannot be contained by death – it is life!

In the midst of our jubilation, we pray for forgiveness, knowing we have been slow to live as Easter people – slow to live by faith – slow to forgive others – slow to love.

Bear the fruit of your love in our lives, we pray – the fruit of goodness, humility, justice, and peace. We confess and ask for mercy in the name of Jesus. **Amen**

So, if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

➤ *There is a redeemer*

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Acts 10:34-43 [NT 129]

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ – he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

1 Corinthians 15:12-26 [NT 176]

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not

been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ – whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.

But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

An Easter Message

A professor once said that we need to talk about death on Easter Sunday – seems a bit weird, right? Then he started talking about sex in the society of the Victorian era (seminary really is more interesting than most people think 😊). In the Victorian era sex was the most dangerous and avoided topic. Every effort was made to refrain from the view or mention of body parts or intimacy – if not hidden altogether – euphemistic and obscuring language would be used. I imagine it to be the opposite of modern media and our current experience where sex is ubiquitous.

Yes, things have changed and today sex seems to be all the rage – everyone talks about it and no one is supposed to be the least bit disturbed by public displays of affection and the like. However, today we have a different taboo – something just as dangerous and fiercely avoided in current circles as sex was in ages past – death. We work very hard to avoid death – talk of it, acceptance of it, the truth of it. In Victorian times that just wasn't possible, but our current culture is strangely disgusted and disturbed by death – it has become the elephant in the room. It haunts us all. Perhaps that is why we obsess about what we eat, why we exercise, take our vitamins, search for age-defying (and by extension, death-defying) lotions, potions, and creams – why we see our doctors with some regularity or avoid attending funerals and visiting hospitals. It seems we are running from death.

There are several stories about the surety of death, here is one...

There was a merchant in Baghdad who sent his servant to market to buy provisions and in a little while the servant came back, white and trembling, saying, "Master, just now when I was in the marketplace I was jostled in the crowd and when I turned, I saw it was Death that jostled me. She looked at me and made a threatening gesture, now, lend me your horse, and I will ride away from this city to avoid my fate. I will go to Samarra where Death will not find me."

The merchant lent him his horse and the servant galloped away as fast as the horse would go. Then the merchant went down to the marketplace and saw Death standing in the crowd. The merchant came over and said, "Why did you make a threatening gesture to my servant when you saw him this morning?"

"That was not a threatening gesture", Death replied, "only a start of surprise. I was astonished to see him in Baghdad, for I have an appointment with him tonight in Samarra."

Today is an anniversary for my sister Anne. Three years ago, on Easter Sunday she went with her children and friends to a spot near Stanley Glacier to disperse the ashes of her infant son, Colin, who died shortly after birth 30 years ago, and the ashes of her husband, Angus, who died in December 2021. Colin had been born with a chromosomal abnormality that meant he would not survive. He died within two days. Angus died suddenly at 66 years of age from a rapidly progressing neurological disease that is always fatal – always. Anne, like so many people, is mourning and celebrating today as she remembers the life and death of these loved ones and moves forward in hope.

If we can't outrun or outsmart death, we try to camouflage it – artificial grass at the cemetery – slumber rooms for the deceased to make it appear that they are not dead but merely sleeping. We put makeup on the corpse in preparation for viewing. But none of this hides the fact of death – or the fear of death – from us. We deny death with our language too. We do not die – we pass away – we cross over – we enter our eternal rest – we are promoted to the church triumphant. And so it goes.

Death is a fact of life, and we must face it. We can't in good conscience deny it as some would have us do because if we can't talk about death how can we possibly talk about the promise of new life? Why would we need to or want to? Without death there is no need for resurrection – no promise that Easter conquers death – no hope. But death is real – and we are all subject to it, so thanks be to God for the message that is shared in John's gospel – a story that admits the despair of death but proclaims the hope and joy of new life – resurrection that is also very real!

When Mary weeps outside the tomb she is in mourning – for the death of her friend, her saviour – and she is afraid because the tomb is open and the body gone. Suddenly she hears her name, and she is overcome by the same light that met her in the tomb – the light of death defeated. Now – in this moment – resurrection is realized.

She makes her way back into the city – this time there is no running – no shouting – no weeping. The news is too great – too joyful. She looks at the gathered community, those who loved him as she did – as she still does – and says, *“I have seen the Lord.”*

Mary tells what she knows to be true: *Jesus was dead – Jesus is alive – he has been resurrected and so death had been outdone – destroyed.* Mary acknowledges the elephant in the room – death – and announces that it is defeated. Darkness is no longer her fate – or ours – because the light is here. God in Jesus has shattered sin and death.

When Mary met Jesus, she felt healed – restored – like she was on her way to becoming a new person. As she experiences the risen Christ, her whole world changes! Death is just as real, but it no longer has any power because it is no longer the end. Sin is no longer an insurmountable barrier between her and God. She is raised up *with* him – a new person – complete in the resurrection. There is hope – joy – life! What good news she has to tell.

If the story of Jesus ended on a cross – on a hill – outside a busy city in a land far away – it would be a story that could not have survived the journey from person to person – community to community – year to year. If the story of Jesus ended on a cross Mary would be weeping still. But the story does not end on the cross – it does not end in death. The story of Jesus *begins* at the cross – *begins* at death – and continues to resurrection and new life.

Proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus, we announce the only cure for death. With Jesus we no longer seek to avoid death – death is dead – now new life begins. We all have Mary’s good news to tell – news of hope – joy – new life. News that God’s grace cannot die but triumphs in resurrection – a message of promise that we witness to each day as we participate in God’s love *for* the world, *in* the world – the story of Jesus Christ – risen and present in the world – alive in each one of us. There is hope – joy – life! What good news we have to tell – *Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!*

➤ ***Every morning is Easter morning***

† Offering and Prayer

Today, we celebrate God's most precious gift – the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As we present our gifts to God this morning, may our generosity reflect God's goodness and the hope we have in Jesus, our Risen Lord.

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*

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Generous God, we recognize how much you have given us in Christ Jesus, and what that gift has cost. Bless our offerings so they may extend the hope and joy we know in you, to the world you love so dearly. In the name of Jesus, the Christ, we pray. Amen

† Pastoral Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

Holy One, we give thanks for the gift of Easter that runs beyond our explanations, beyond our categories of reason, beyond the sinking sense of our own lives.

We know about the powers of death, powers that persist among us, powers that drive us from you, from our neighbour, from our best selves. We know about the powers of fear and greed and anxiety, and brutality and certitude, powers before which we are helpless.

And then you, O Lord, you at dawn, unquenched – you in the darkness; you on Saturday – you who breaks the world to joy. Yours is the kingdom... not the kingdom of death – yours is the power... not the power of death – yours is the glory... not the glory of death. Christ is risen and we give you thanks!

To you, O God, who makes all things new, we come this day in dazzled thanksgiving for the reconciliation, transformation and healing you have wrought in our midst.

To you we come this day in daring hope for the reconciliations, transformations and healings we want yet to receive – believing in them though the world says they are not possible. We dare to imagine reconciliation in war torn places – trust that bridges political and theological divides – caring between those who have so little and those who have too much – transformation in our own lives – healing among the broken.

We risk uttering the groanings of our hearts that it might be possible to move past our burdens of fear, abuse, weariness, or loneliness. Christ is risen and we seek to be made new. We give you thanks that in Christ Jesus you have opened the way for all to approach you in prayer. As Jesus offered himself for us – we offer our petitions to you in silence...

We give you thanks that even now in Christ Jesus we taste the new wine of the gospel. Already the past is finished and gone. We gather this day – a community of witnesses – a community of faith. Fill us with the Spirit of the resurrection as we seek to become your redemptive people. We are bold to pray as Jesus taught... ***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, for ever. Amen***

➤ ***Thine be the glory***

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Thank you/Announcements/Land Acknowledgement

Thank you all for celebrating in Easter worship today – in person or on-line.

Here are some highlights from our weekly announcements, emailed earlier this week...
Laura, do you have any additional announcements?

Please join me in the Land Acknowledgement displayed on the screen...

For thousands of years, Indigenous peoples have walked this land – a relationship at the centre of their lives and spirituality. Whenever we are gathered on this traditional and unceded territory of the ləkʷəŋən and the W̱SÁNEĆ, we acknowledge their stewardship of this land throughout the ages. Whenever we pray, reflect, and celebrate in this place, we do so as guests lamenting past and present injustices. We ask that the God of love and justice lead us along the path of reconciliation – inspiring new relationships of respect and solidarity.

Blessing

Now that you have heard the good news – what will you do? I pray that you will go with Easter Joy! Filling your homes with love and laughter. Inspiring our community with sharing and support. Encouraging one another with enthusiasm and action. Working for justice and peace in our struggling world. Considering that with the living Christ all things are possible. Easter joy will not stop at Easter – thanks be to God! May the grace of the risen Christ, the love of God and the nurturing community of the Spirit embrace us all.

➤ ***Don't be afraid (repeat)***