

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, March 31st, 2024
Rev. Gerry Gallant

He is Risen!
Easter Sunday
Matthew 28:1-20

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

In our anguish we cried to the LORD,
and he answered by setting us free.
Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

The LORD is our strength and our song;
he has become our salvation.
Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

We will not die but live,
and will proclaim what the LORD has done.
Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

The stone the builders rejected
has become the capstone;
The LORD has done this;
and it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Holy God, creator of all,

the risen Christ taught from Scripture.
of his death, resurrection,
and ascension into your glorious presence.
May the living Lord?
breathe on us his peace,
that our eyes may be opened to recognize him in breaking bread
and to follow wherever he leads,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

Children’s Hymn: “He’s Got the Whole World in his Hands”

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

**Loving and life-giving God,
you raised Jesus from the grave
and shattered the powers of sin and death.
But we confess that we remain captive to fear,
resisting the hope that new life is possible for us.
We hide in tombs of indifference,
seeking comfort rather than justice in this world.
We cling to resentment and disappointment,
refusing the freedom that comes with forgiveness.
Forgive us, O God,
and restore us to joy and wholeness through your great mercy. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

God, who is rich in mercy,
out of the great love with which he loved us
even when we were dead through our trespasses,
made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—
and raised us up with him and seated us with him
in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
so that in the ages to come he might show
the immeasurable riches of his grace
in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

The Lord’s Prayer

**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 the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen.

Music Ministry: “This Day of Resurrection” Choir

Responsive Reading

Psalm 46:8-11

⁸ Come, behold the works of the LORD,
 how he has brought desolations on the earth.
⁹ **He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
 he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
 he burns the chariots with fire.**

¹⁰ “Be still, and know that I am God.
 I will be exalted among the nations,
 I will be exalted in the earth!”

¹¹ **The LORD of hosts is with us;
 the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah***

Hymn #258: “Thine Be the Glory”

Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
 endless is the victory thou o’er death hast won;
 angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
 kept the folded grave-clothes where thy body lay.

Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
 endless is the victory thou o’er death hast won.

Lo! Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;
 lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
 let the Church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,
 for her Lord now liveth; death hath lost its sting.
 Thine be the glory...

No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of life;
 life is nought without thee: aid us in our strife;
 make us more than conquerors, through thy deathless love:
 bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above.

Thine be the glory...

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Matthew 28:1-20

The Resurrection

28 Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." ⁸ So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

The Report of the Guard

¹¹ While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. ¹² And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers ¹³ and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' ¹⁴ And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." ¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

The Great Commission

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Sermon

On the Sunday morning after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ the city of Jerusalem was starting its day just like any other day. People were waking up and carrying on their days as if nothing in the world had really changed. Little did they know just how much the world had actually changed.

There was a small group though that was beginning to understand what had happened. The disciples and Jesus's other faithful followers were all wrestling to grasp what had happened in the week leading up to Jesus' crucifixion upon the cross. Those who had known Jesus while he walked and taught, struggled to grasp his final teachings. And those who had come to a sudden realization of who he was like the roman soldier who had come to the sudden realization of who Jesus was as he was upon the cross.

On this Sunday morning as they all tried to process what had happened and what was going to happen next, a few of the women who had followed Christ, head to the tomb to complete the burial process that they had been forced to rush through on Friday. They want to take the time to wash the body and anoint it properly before they carefully wrap it in linens.

The disciples themselves are in hiding, fearful of being recognized as one of the disciples of Jesus and facing the same persecution and death that he had faced. Many are afraid to even step out of the house they are in, while others have fled the city in hope of escaping the persecution.

When the women arrive at the tomb something happens that cannot be explained. There is another earthquake, like an aftershock of the great earthquake that had happened at the crucifixion at that very moment that our Saviour had died upon the cross of Calvary. The women look ahead and an angel come from heaven and roll the heavy stone that had been sealing the tomb shut away. The soldiers who had been placed to guard the tomb who witnessed this all faint from fear.

Mary the sister of Lazarus has seen a tomb opened before, when the Lord raised her brother from death. She watched a revived man walk from the tomb covered in his linen death wraps and in need of help to be freed of them. So perhaps that is what she is anticipating at this moment, a revived Jesus Christ to walk from the tomb and seek out their help to be freed from his wraps. However, Jesus does not emerge from the tomb.

The angel sees their confusion and fear. He says to them.

Matthew 28: 5-7

⁵ But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead,

and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.”

The women who are also very likely afraid are told by the angel, ‘Do not fear’. The very same words that the angel Gabriel had spoken to Mary when he came to announce the birth of Jesus Christ to her.

The tomb is empty, the linens he had been wrapped in folded neatly and laid at the head of the slate he had been laid upon as if he had woken up and gotten changed before heading out for the day, yet the tomb had been sealed the entire time.

The women are probably still processing all of the event of the morning as they turn from the tomb and rush off back to the city to share what they have witnessed and been told.

Matthew says that they were filled with fear and great joy, as they headed back to the city to the disciples who were there in hiding. However something is about to happen, that will forever change their mindset, something that will forever change their lives, because as they are heading back to the city to share the events of the morning, they encounter the Risen Lord Jesus themselves.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a historical reality. Even though many scholars from a multitude of cultures, times and backgrounds have tried to disprove the Biblical accounts of that very first easter Sunday, there can be no doubts that what the Gospels tell us about Easter are true. Not only is it true in a historical sense, but it is also a core truth of the Christian faith.

In modern churches there are false prophets who cast doubts of the historical truth of the resurrection, the virgin birth and many of the miracles that Jesus performed as he walked upon the earth. They want people to believe that it does not really matter if these things are truthful or not. They claim that even if Jesus did not raise from the tomb, it does not take anything away from our faith, that Christ was still a ‘good moral teacher’.

However, those claims go against so much of what Peter, Paul and many of the church fathers proclaimed to the people in the early church. For them the death of Jesus upon the cross as a sacrifice for our sins was critical, but even more so was the resurrection of Jesus from the grave that Sunday morning.

In Peter’s proclamation to the crowds on the day of Pentecost he does not hesitate to make this point at the very summit of his sermon.

Acts 2:22-24

²² “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— ²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴ God

raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

Paul does the very same thing in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

There is no doubt when you read the Scriptures and the teachings of the early church fathers that the death and resurrection of Christ was both a historically truthful event and absolutely essential to an understanding of the Christian faith. So that leaves us one question to explore, what does the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ mean to each of us on a personal level?

Imagine if the Biblical account of the resurrection was different. If Jesus had never appeared to the women and the disciples, if he had gone into hiding or had been immediately taken up to heaven instead of taking time to walk upon the earth with the disciples and the people for forty days would things have been different?

Would the empty tomb alone have been enough to support the faith of the disciples in the face of persecution and death? Would their disappointment, despair and fear be driven away by an empty tomb alone, could it alone be a place from which joy, hope, and perseverance in the face of death could come from?

Ask yourselves, would the empty tomb alone have been enough to suffer the persecution of the early church? I doubt it, I believe that if the tomb had simply been empty, the disciples would have eventually succumbed into their doubts, just like Thomas was, and eventually their faith would have waned, and they would have stopped preaching Christ to others because of the fear of persecution. Christianity would have died off in the first century, when the persecution of Christians was at its peak.

It is not the historical truth of the empty tomb that gave early Christians the faith to endure. It was not the promises and prophecies of Jesus, it was not the great earthquake, the tearing of the veil or even the appearance of an angel of the Lord that gave them such perseverance.

The women left that tomb filled with a combination of 'joy and fear' two competing emotions, and we all know that even if we are filled with joy, fear is quite often the emotion that wins out. But what came as they left that tomb was a moment, an instant, a life-changing moment that would allow their joy to overcome their fear for the rest of their lives, a personal encounter with the risen Lord.

That personal encounter with Christ is critical, you can explain the historical truths of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to an atheist until you are blue in the face, in fact there are many atheists who will support you in this argument. The truth is that it often takes a personal encounter with the risen Lord not an argument based upon logic, reason, truth, and fact for people to come to faith.

We have all heard stories of worshipers of other religions coming to Christ without ever meeting a Christian or reading the Bible. Many of them claim that Christ appeared to them in some aspect of their lives. Then there are the testimonies of those who are sitting in solitary prison who come to the realization of the truth of the Jesus of the Gospels as they contemplate their own lives. The Holy Spirit touches them, Jesus Christ literally comes into their lives, and they become faithful.

The best Biblical example of this is Saul. Saul knew all the truth and facts of the ministry and life of Jesus. It was his job to drive out the Christians, to either get them to denounce Jesus, or face punishment, right up to death. And as he is on his way to Damascus to carry out his objective of crushing Christianity, Jesus personally appears to him. After he personally meets Jesus his whole world changes and instead of persecuting Christians, he gives his life to service of the Lord and proclaiming the Gospels, even as he faces the same persecution that he brought upon Christians himself.

That personal encounter forever changed him, the same way the women from the tomb were changed from their personal encounter with the risen Lord. In that instant, Jesus became the most important reality in their lives, and living for and serving him became a priority in their lives.

There are many people in this world who call themselves Christians. They basically accept the majority of what the Bible teaches, at least on an intellectual level. They believe that they are active members of the faith community. They live a religious life, at least on the surface level, but they have not yet had this personal encounter with the risen Lord. They are people who know the fountain of Living Water, they are offered the Bread of Life, and yet they do not choose to drink from the fountain or eat of the bread that can give them eternal life because of the changes they would have to make in their own life to be in a personal relationship with God.

In Christ, God offers his faithful eternal life, citizenship in the Kingdom of heaven. However we must be willing to receive that gift, we need to be willing to accept Jesus into our lives and enter into a relationship with him, one where we seek to know him better and live our lives

according to his Word. Knowledge of the Scriptures, knowledge of the death and resurrection of Jesus are of no benefit to anyone, unless you are willing to take ownership of them – to make Jesus part of your life and give yourself over to him, after all even Satan acknowledges the factual truth of the Scriptures.

That's our first lesson today – seek out a personal relationship with God.

When the women who were running from the tomb met the risen Lord and recognized him did you notice how they reacted?

Matthew 28: 9-10

⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

They did not just stand and stare in awe, they did not jump up and down in excitement while they giggled, they did not just casually chat with him or even run away in fear. They fell at his feet, clasped them, and worshipped him.

We all know the scriptures.

Exodus 20:3-6

³ "You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

No Jew would bow down in worship to anyone but the One True Living God.

Yet these women, who had been following Jesus for quite some time, they believed that he was the man destined for the throne of David as spoken of in the prophecies. These women recognized that the Risen Jesus was in fact the Son of the Living God and they reacted in the only appropriate way, they worshiped him.

Worship is more than just coming to church on Sunday once in a while, it is more than coming for just an hour or two every Sunday. It is more than just the singing of songs and praise. It is more that prayer and telling God how good and wonderful he is.

Worship is the recognition of who Jesus is, the Son of God, The Son- not just a man of God. And the only proper response for those who come to this realization is to humble ourselves before

him and let him be the Lord of lords and the King of kings in every aspect of our lives. This involves trust and obedience; it involves us handing over our selfishness and letting the Lord teach us the direction we should walk in our lives. Simply put, if you want to get to heaven, you need to let the Captain of Salvation steer the ship to its destination.

The last lesson that we can find in today's Scripture is the result of the first two lessons. If we have a personal relationship with the risen Lord and we worship him as God in our lives, that relationship and worship will eventually lead to evangelism.

Once we hand our lives over to God and let him begin to direct our ways – we will often find that we are in places in this world where we are given the opportunity to share the truth of his death, resurrection, ascension to heaven and coming again in glory through our testimony with others. We do this every Sunday when we gather in this church as a congregation of the Lord, and as we join together in affirming our Christian faith.

It is easy to do this when we gather together on Sunday, after all we all believe the same thing and it's very likely we are all in almost 100% agreement with one another on all of the important aspects of the faith.

However, are we the same outside of the church in our daily lives?

The angel who appeared to the two women that morning told them, 'come and see... and ... go quickly' The risen Lord repeated that instruction, 'go and tell.'

The good news of the Gospel is not something that we are meant to keep to ourselves. The blessings of Jesus Christ in our lives are not meant to be kept locked up in a box in our hearts, it is not meant to be something that we enjoy in private or only in the presence of other like-minded Christians. It is meant to be spread out and shared with anyone who is willing to have a personal relationship with the Lord, in fact God wants us all to accept Him into our lives.

The last command given by the risen Lord to his disciples before he is taken up into heaven according to the book of Matthew is:

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The Great Commission, and the truth of the Easter story comes together perfectly.

Jesus tells the disciples that he is God, he is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit and the Father has given him an authority that knows no bounds. He rules over heaven and earth and that is why we should worship him and submit to him in every aspect of our lives.

Jesus then directs us to make disciples of the world. As we witness of his life, death, and resurrection to others in our lives and in the lives of others we are calling people to also receive him as their Lord and Saviour and to join us in following him, to join us in worship and service and evangelism. Ask yourself can people hear in your words and see in your lives that you are sending out an invitation to join in praising and worshiping the One True living God?

Finally, the Great commission ends with the promise that Jesus' presence will be with us everywhere and in all things. When we are sent out into the world it is not alone, he is always with us, in all we say and in all we do. We are not alone. The personal encounter with Jesus means that we will never be alone again. It is not a one and done experience, it is everlasting, his presence is a privilege that we can enjoy every day and everywhere- as long as we accept him into our lives, as long as we are willing to make him our Lord and King and humble ourselves before him in worship and praise.

So let us walk in the footsteps of those two women who were the first to witness the risen Jesus; Let us seek to live in his presence every day, to worship him as our Lord and Saviour and go out and share the glory of his name as we walk as the Salt and Light of God's Word in this world.

Christ is Risen – He is risen indeed!

Raise Us to Eternal Life

Lord God, heavenly Father,
 you gave up your Son for our offenses
 and raised him again for our justification.
 Give us your Holy Spirit,
 that he may rule and govern us
 according to your will,
 graciously keep us in the true faith,
 defend us from all sins
 and after this life
 raise us to eternal life;
 through your beloved Son,
 Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one true God,
 now and forever.

Source: , d. 1549, Quinquagesima

Hymn: "Lamb of God"

Your only son no sin to hide; but You have sent Him from Your side
 To Walk upon this guilty sod, and to become the Lamb of God

CHORUS

Oh Lamb of God, sweet Lamb of God, I love the holy Lamb of God
 Oh wash me in His precious blood, my Jesus Christ the Lamb of God
 Your gift of love they crucified, they laughed and scorned Him as He died
 The humble king they named a fraud, and sacrificed the Lamb of God.

CHORUS

I was so lost I should have died; but You have brought me to Your side
 To be led by Your staff and rod, and to be called a lamb of God.

CHORUS

Communion

Invitation to the Table

Why do we give thanks and praise before this table?

We give thanks for God's work of creation, liberation, and salvation.

It is indeed right,
 our duty and delight,
 that we should at all
 times and in all places give thanks to you,
 O holy Lord, eternal God.
 You created the heavens and the earth and
 all that is in them;
 you made us in your own image;
 and in countless ways
 you show us your mercy.
 Therefore, with choirs of angels and
 the whole company of heaven,
 we worship and adore your glorious name,
 joining our voices in their unending praise:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
 heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

All glory and blessing are yours,
 O holy God, for in your mercy
 you gave your only Son, Jesus Christ.

He took our human nature
 and suffered death on the cross for our redemption.
 There he made a perfect sacrifice
 for the sins for the whole world.
 We praise you that before he suffered and died,
 our Savior gave us this holy sacrament
 and commanded us to continue it until he comes again.

What do we remember at this table?
**We remember God's gracious love for us, Christ's death and
 resurrection for us, and the Spirit's tender care for us.**

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Dying, you destroyed our death;
 rising, you restored our life.
 Lord Jesus, come in glory.**

Merciful God, pour out your Holy Spirit on these gifts of bread
 and wine, that in eating and drinking we may be made one
 with Christ and one another.

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 again 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.**

The Story of the Last Supper

The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread,
and when he had given thanks for it, he broke it, and said,
'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying,
'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in
remembrance of me.'

Congregation of Jesus Christ,
the Lord has prepared his table for all who love him
and trust in him alone for their salvation.
All who are truly sorry for their sins,
who sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus
as their Savior,
and who desire to live in obedience to him as Lord
are now invited to come with gladness
to the table of the Lord.

Take and eat.
This is the body of Christ, which is given for you.
Do this, remembering him.

This cup is the new covenant
sealed by Christ's blood,
which was shed that the sins of many
might be forgiven.
Drink from it, all of you

Prayer after Communion

We thank and praise you, Jesus Christ,
for these gifts of bread and wine,
signs of your great sacrifice for us
and, by your Spirit's presence and power,
a means for us to commune with you.
We eat this bread and drink this cup
to refresh our hearts,
to strengthen our faith,
and to rouse our hope
that soon we shall take our places at your heavenly banquet
to eat and drink with you and all you have redeemed.
For all your gifts, we bless you, Lord.

Above all, your heavenly food,
 pardoning grace, and life-giving Word
 motivate us to sing that you are good. Amen

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Offertory Prayer
(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn #274: "Crown Him With Many Crowns" (V 1,3,5)

Crown him with many crowns,
 the Lamb upon the throne:
 hark, how the heavenly anthem drowns
 all music but its own!
 Awake, my soul, and sing
 of him who died to be
 your Saviour and your matchless King
 through all eternity.

Crown him the Lord of life,
 who triumphed o'er the grave,
 and rose victorious in the strife
 for those he came to save.
 His glories now we sing
 who died and rose on high,
 who died eternal life to bring,
 and lives that death may die.

Crown him the Lord of years,
 the Source, the End of time,
 Creator of the rolling spheres
 in majesty sublime.
 All hail, Redeemer, hail,
 for you have died for me;
 your praise shall never, never fail
 through all eternity!

Pastoral Prayer

God of power and possibility,
 you broke open the tomb that held our Lord.
 Now break open your church,
 tense and tired after months of pandemic restrictions,
 worried over differences and disagreements,
 uncertain about the way ahead in mission and service.
 Guide us with your wise and creative Spirit.
 Resurrect, renew, and revive your church!

God of resurrection and new life,
 you broke into the hearts of Jesus' fearful friends.
 Now break into our relationships with one another.
 Where they are vibrant and life-giving, nurture them.
 Where they are strained by misunderstanding or neglect, reconcile them.
 Heal us with your merciful and engaging Spirit.
 Resurrect, renew and revive our life together!

God of might and mercy,
 you broke open the schemes of those who stood in the way of your love.
 Now break open the governance of your world.
 Stir the minds and hearts of leaders to work for peace and justice.
 Where laws are corrupt, where deceptions masquerades as truth,
 and where people suffer under the schemes of those who lust for power,
 confront people with your Spirit of truth and compassion.
 Resurrect, renew and revive the community of nations!

God of healing and hope,
 you broke the bonds of death which tried to shackle new life.
 Now break into situations of illness, pain, grief, and loss.
 Wherever people are sick in body, mind, or spirit,
 and wherever people mourn the loss of a loved one or a cherished future,
 embrace each one with your Spirit of comfort and courage.
 Resurrect, renew and revive our lives!

God of Easter Renewal and Resurrection,
 you have broken into our lives again this day.
 Break into all our moments of celebration and joy,
 By your Spirit, give us gratitude, generosity
 and the grace to understand each other.
 Resurrect, renew and revive our souls and spirits!

We pray these prayers as well as all of the unspoken prayers that are in our hearts this day in the name of the one who has died and risen, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Benediction

Grace to you and peace
from him who is and who was and who is to come,
and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,
and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead,
and the ruler of the kings of the earth.
To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood,
and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father,
to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. **Amen.**