

Welcome to First Congregational Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

April 4, 2021—Easter Sunday

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

FIRST PEOPLES LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to acknowledge that the land on which we worship, live, work, and commune is the original homelands of the Wabanaki Confederacy, the Abenaki people and the Pennacook people. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced removal from this territory, and we honor and respect the many diverse Indigenous peoples still connected to this land on which we gather.

Prelude

Morning Reverie

(Adele)

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP: (written by Thom. M Shuman)

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

We have not seen the Risen Christ,

but we see him in the lives of those transformed by grace.

We have not seen Jesus face-to-face,

but we have seen him in the faces of everyone whose love encourages us.

We have not touched the wounds from the cross,

But we have been called to bring healing to the scarred of the world.

Bringing Ourselves into God's Presence: (written by Christine Jerrett)

This is the day that you have made:

You have filled it with signs of your presence;

Your Spirit's breath permeates every moment;

Your grace fills each experience;

Your promises move within events, pulling us toward hope. Receive our thanks.

Receive our praise, through Christ our Lord for in his love we know your deep love, your faithfulness, your grace.

PSALTER LESSON

Psalm 118:17-24 (The Message)

Sara Nichols

I didn't die. I *lived!*

And now I'm telling the world what God did.

God tested me, he pushed me hard,

but he didn't hand me over to Death.

Swing wide the city gates—the *righteous* gates!

I'll walk right through and thank God!

This Temple Gate belongs to God,

so the victors can enter and praise.

²¹⁻²⁵ Thank you for responding to me;

you've truly become my salvation!

The stone the masons discarded as flawed

is now the capstone!

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This is God's work.

We rub our eyes—we can hardly believe it!

This is the very day God acted—

let's celebrate and be festive!

Salvation now, God. Salvation now!

Oh yes, God—a free and full life!

SONG: #241

Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day

1 Joy dawned again on Easter Day,
the sun shone out with bright array;
For when the Apostles hid in fear,
the Risen Christ to them appeared.

2 O Jesus, Savior, Gentle One,
come take our hearts to be your own,
That we may give you all our days
the willing tribute of our praise.

3 O Sovereign One, with us abide
in this our joyful Easter-tide;
From every weapon death can wield,
your own redeemed forever shield.

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 24:1-12 (NRSV)

24 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵ The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them,

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.”

⁸ Then they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

LENTEN CANDLE RITUAL FOR EASTER SUNDAY

PROCLAMATION

The light which the world tried to extinguish cannot be put out. Today we light the candles again, proclaiming the transforming power of God. As the light returns, we give thanks that God's transforming love has been, is now, and will ever be at work within us. Today we celebrate: new life, new joy, new possibilities. Christ is alive and living among us!

As we light the candles, we acknowledge that there is still pain and suffering in the world, but we place our trust in God and in the way shown by Jesus Christ. In the midst of darkness, there is light. In the pain of death, there is life. In the face of what appear to us to be overwhelming odds, God is at work in us and in the world, working for justice and peace, compassion and love, and life abundant. Christ is risen; Christ is risen in us, for wherever we gather in his name, he is there. (All candles are re-lit.)

Alleluia, Christ is risen; Christ is risen indeed!

CHOIR ANTHEM	Christ the Lord is Risen Today	First Church Choir
SERMON	Moving from Cliché to Celebration	Rev. Emilia Halstead
SONG: #236	Hallelujah (sung x3 through)	
	Halle, halle, hallelujah!	
	Halle, halle, hallelujah!	
	Halle, halle, hallelujah!	
	Hallelujah! Hallelujah!	

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

PASTORAL PRAYER (WRITTEN BY THOM M. SHUMAN)

INVITATION TO THE OFFERTORY

GRATITUDE MUSIC Now The Green Blade Rises (BBC Songs of Praise)

PRAYER OF DEDICATION:

God of seekers and doubters, bless these gifts so that the world may know that you are always appearing. Bless our hands so that your love might appear in the work we share. Amen.

SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMN: #347 Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ

Let us talents and tongues employ,
reaching out with a shout of joy:
bread is broken, the wine is poured,
Christ is spoken and seen and heard.
Jesus lives again; earth can breathe again.
Pass the Word around: loaves abound!

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Christ is able to make us one,
at his table he set the tone,
teaching people to live to bless,
love in word and in deed express.
Jesus lives again; earth can breathe again.
Pass the Word around: loaves abound!

Jesus calls us in, sends us out
bearing fruit in a world of doubt,
gives us love to tell, bread to share:
God (Immanuel) everywhere!
Jesus lives again; earth can breathe again.
Pass the Word around: loaves abound!

INVITATION

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING:
God is with you!

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to our Creator.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give you our thanks and praise, O God! [...] And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

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 our God.

Hosanna in the highest.

You are holy, O God of Life, and holy is Jesus Christ, your Son, the resurrected One. [...] Through his resurrection Life we now offer the prayer that he first taught us, saying...

LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

TELLING THE STORY

It is as the renewed and enlivened people of God that we gather this morning and remember [...]

Great is the mystery of faith:

**Dying you destroyed our death,
rising you restored our life.**

Lord Jesus, come in glory.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

SHARING THE FEAST OF LOVE

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:

Holy and gracious God, here at this table your promise of life is made tangible. We have rested in the depth of your love. We have tasted your nourishing, nurturing presence. We accept you into our bodies and into our lives. Together, at this table, you have offered us life. Together, by your grace, we accept the life you offer. And we give you thanks. Amen.

SONG: #245

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 has brought us over,

with hymns of victory.

2 Our hearts be pure from evil,

that we may see aright

the Christ who reigns eternal

in resurrection light;

We listen for the teachings

once heard so calm and plain,

for we, too, want to follow

And raise the victor strain.

3 Now let the heavens be joyful!

Let earth the song begin!

the whole world keep high triumph,

and all that is therein!

Let all things seen and unseen

their notes in gladness blend,

for Christ again has risen,

our joy that has no end.

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK

BENEDICTION & SENDING (written by Thom M. Shuman)

Go now before us, Risen Christ, into the world of your loving, the world of your living and dying, and there, help us to bear witness to your Risen Life.

**Christ be with us,
Christ be within us,
Christ be behind us,
Christ be before us,
Christ to comfort and restore us.**

**Christ in quiet,
Christ in danger,
Christ in the hearts of all who love us,
Christ in the mouths of both friend and stranger.**

And the blessing of God: Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit, be with you, and among you, and go with you wherever you go, now and always. Amen.

POSTLUDE

Jazz Waltz

(Adele)

