

Sunday, April 12th
Easter Service
Mantua Center Christian Church
MCCC Home Worship

You will need:

A candle and match

Bible

Paper

Bread and Juice (if desiring communion)

Order of Worship

GREETING - CHAD

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

Happy Easter everyone and welcome to worship this week with the Mantua Center Christian Church. Together...seeking to have Open Minds, Open Hearts, and Open Arms bearing the love and likeness of the Risen Christ.

My name is Rev. Chad Delaney. I'm serving today with Sarah Smith and Adam Petrosino. We are receiving a gift of music from Pam Auble today and hearing from our Xplor Residents, Natalie Langham and Heidi George.

If you desire, you can get a Bible to follow along with the scriptures, Bread & Juice for communion, a candle with a match. Feel free to "pause" it here and get what you need if desired.

CALL to WORSHIP - Chad

Family in Christ, All Lent long we have gathered Around the Table and today we celebrate the Risen Christ who meets us at our tables wherever we are. So let's turn our minds and hearts from other things and light a candle to remind us of God's abiding presence.

Light a Candle

Let's prepare for worship with this reading by Ann Siddall

We are not eye-witnesses to an event, as were Mary and the disciples;
we have not journeyed through a dangerous city to seek answers or
consolation;
we have not seen angels gathering at the rim of this day,
or wept in the garden this morning because we could not find Him.

But we are here to attest to a story that has not lost its power during
twenty centuries of change and conflict.

We are here because those before us carried this story as if it were
precious gold; cherished it as if it were the key to a hidden wisdom.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, take your places here today in celebration
and in awe.

What you are about to hear again, has the capacity to change the world.
Your very presence attests to the rising up of life from the tomb of
despair, and to the uncontrollable power of God.

It is Easter morning again: and we will celebrate.

OPENING SCRIPTURE - Heidi George, Xplor Resident

2 Corinthians 5:14-20

¹⁴For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. ¹⁵And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. ¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! ¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. ²⁰So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

OPENING HYMN - "Christ the Lord is Risen Today" #216 **FOUR verses (Put Lyrics on Screen!)

- 1 Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!
All creation join to say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!

- Sing, O heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!
- 2 Lives again our glorious king; Alleluia!
Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!
Jesus died, our souls to save, Alleluia!
Where your victory, O grave? Alleluia!
- 3 Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!
Christ has opened paradise. Alleluia!
- 4 Soar we now where Christ was led, Alleluia!
Following our exalted head, Alleluia!
Made like him, like him we rise, Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

MESSAGE of HOPE - from Natalie Langham, Xplor Resident (about 4 min vid)

CHILDREN'S MOMENT - Pam Auble (Pam will send)

Ho Ho Ho Hosanna! Singing

INVITATION TO CELEBRATION AND GIVING - Sarah Smith

A joyous Easter morning church family near and far. I am delighted to be in community with you this morning. We have so much to celebrate: Jesus our Lord is risen, with spring comes renewal and rebirth. Look out a window near you: can you hear the birds? Can you see nature starting to come back from her long rest? I invite you to pause and write down 5 blessings that you can see without even leaving your seat.

We may be spread out, but that does not mean that the church is not at work! I have seen everyone praying and connecting through zoom, through letters, through social media. I have seen folks responsibly come together to feed the community and clothe the needy and bring a smile through parades. Many people in our community have started making masks for people to wear in regard to new CDC guidelines, and I am surprised they still have fingers, they are cranking them out so fast!

Yes we have many causes to celebrate in our community. This week when you consider giving, I invite you to think in three categories: physical, emotional, and self-giving. For physical gifts, think of all the folks that need food or donations to get through this time. In this, consider moving your offering online through the church's website. Pass along a smile, a thought, a message to someone you love. Finally, don't forget to look inward. What do you need to get through this? Are there gifts that we could help you with?

Know that we are here for you as you feel called to interact with us. Love you church.
Happy Easter.

PASTORAL PRAYER - Chad

Take with me a deep breath.....let us pray...

God of New Life, we give you thanks and praise for this day you have made. We thank you, Lord, for the gift of Jesus Christ and for the gift of resurrection that you have written into the world around us--the blooming flowers, the budding leaves, the sunshine.

Together we have walked this journey of Lent in a new way. We have gathered around Tables and Living Rooms and Screens, but we know you meet us here. God with Us, we celebrate today that by your grace and presence you've made a home with us. You did shy away from the cross and tomb, but endured through pain and abandonment...come be with us in every painful place in our lives, in every painful place in our world. You, who sent those first women of courage to proclaim the resurrection, and You who even abided with the other disciples who were hiding and frightened, come and be with us in every frightened place in our lives, in every frightened place in our world. You who revealed yourself at the Table in the breaking of bread...come be with us in our hunger and thirst, come be with every hungry and thirsty place in our world. Bring life. Bring love. Bring hope.

God who Listens, we are carrying heavy burdens in these hours....we are reflecting on the profound joys in our lives. We give them to you now in silent prayer....

God of Resurrection and New Life, come and make us your living Church, Your risen Church, Your Easter Church and hear us as we pray the prayer the Risen One taught us to pray saying...

MUSIC OFFERING "In the Garden" by Pam Auble on Guitar

SCRIPTURE - Chad

Luke 24:1-21

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when

they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵The 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. ⁶Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.’ ⁸Then they remembered his words, ⁹and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹²But 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. ¹³Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, ‘What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?’ They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?’ ¹⁹He asked them, ‘What things?’ They replied, ‘The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place.

SERMON - Chad

Even a Little Hope is Enough



Have you ever seen the movie the Princess Bride? It's about a Farm Boy named Westley who falls in love with Princess Buttercup. There is fencing, fighting, torture, revenge, giants, monsters, chases, escapes, True Love, miracles....If that doesn't sound too bad...it'd be a good one while staying at home.



Anyway, at one point the main character gets hooked up to a torture device called “The Machine” and basically gets the Life sucked out of him. His 2 friends--Inigo and Fezzik--find him and think that he is dead. So as a last ditch effort to try and save him, they take him to “Miracle Max.” Miracle Max takes a look at him and says, “Well it just so happens that your friend here is only mostly dead. There’s a big difference

between mostly dead and all dead.” There’s just a little bit of hope...and its enough.



Now coming off the devastating events of Holy Week--the betrayal, denial, trial, and crucifixion--there is every reason to think that all hope is lost for those who followed Jesus. Any hope Jesus’ followers had was dead...sealed up in that cold, dark Tomb.



So we watch with great anticipation that first Easter Morning how the Disciples will respond. Mary, Mary, and Joanna--who were the first to show up--responded initially with perplexity and fear, but it quickly turned to inspiration and belief. All it took was the sight of the empty tomb and a reminder from 2 angels to have their hope reignited. So much so that they become the very first preachers of

the Gospel. They were off and running to share the Good News! Peter, too, listened and believed...but what about all those other disciples? How did they respond? You’d think that all this news of empty tombs, angels, and rising would revive them, but some of them clearly started moving on.



Luke tells the story of two such disciples who were actually leaving town. Whether heading home or getting out of there to save their own lives...we don't know. But whatever idle tales were being spun about Jesus raising...they weren't buying it...these disciples clearly believed this Jesus-thing is something of the past. So this stranger sidles up to them on the road--who we know to be Incognito Jesus--and they tell him about "Jesus of Nazareth, who **WAS (past tense)** a

prophet mighty in deed and word before God". "we **had hoped** that he was the one to redeem Israel." These guys are crushed. They are grieving. Their hope in all that Jesus came for and all that could have been....is mostly dead.



In this season of staying home, we can relate to that kind of grief. All of us have "we had hoped" things running through our minds. I'll fully admit that today I am missing all of you. **I had hoped** to gather at Derthick's Farm for sunrise. I had hoped to gather for our Easter breakfast. I had hoped to be in the sanctuary with all of you--all singing "Christ the Lord is Risen Today" at the top of our lungs.



I bet some of you...Had hoped to go to some ball games this spring
see grandparents this weekend
to go on our trip
to have a job right now
To be a bit scared every time you go out the door...

...*you fill in the blank*

For many of us, the stark realities of what has happened, this barrage of bad news is burdensome. We might

feel all nostalgic, lament the passing of the good old days, speak about hope in the past tense.



Those Disciples long ago said “We had hoped that Jesus was the one to redeem Israel.” And it shouldn’t be lost on us the humor of that statement. There they are walking along lamenting what might have been and Jesus is literally right there with them. The living breathing, risen Lord...walking beside them and they just don’t see it. If you get a chance, please read the rest of the passage. At the very point when Jesus could have moved on...the disciples extend an invitation to this stranger to come in. And this powerful moment happens. Incognito Jesus sits down at their Table. He takes the bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to them. Finally they see.

The scripture says, “their eyes were opened and they recognized him.” He was walking with them the whole time. With their hope restored they return to Jerusalem proclaiming “The Lord has risen indeed!”

In those times when it feels like the life has been sucked out of us, when our hopes are mostly dead...let’s remember that there is a big difference between hope being mostly dead and all dead. All Christ needs is a little sliver to work with. The one who told us that faith the size of a mustard seed is enough to move a mountain, reminds us that even a little hope is enough.



So what a gift it is to know that

whether we are hopeful and unfazed or hopeless and despairing...the Risen Christ will meet us there. Christ meets us if we are thriving and springing to action like Mary, Mary, and Joanna...or if we are walking away, if we are tired and discouraged, and wondering what might have been. Whatever space you are in...still know the Risen Incognito Christ comes to meet with you!

So this Easter and hence forth Keep your eyes and heart open...even if its just a crack.

The Risen Christ revealed, HOPE restored and renewed through simple everyday moments, Around the Table in the bread and cup. But also in the laughter of a child. In a word of encouragement from an unexpected place. In words and deeds of

peace-making and justice-seeking for the least of these. In gifts of forgiveness and generosity, compassion and love.

Sister Joan Chittister says, “Every time we see Jesus where we did not recognize him before—in the faces of the poor, in the love of the unloved, in the revelatory moments of life, Jesus rises anew.”

Keep your eyes and hearts open Church, for the Risen Lord!



Family of God, Easter Morning is our reminder that crosses, tombs, or death in any of its forms is enough to extinguish the redemptive purposes of God. God always finds a way. Where the world closes a door, God opens up construction on a new wing of the house. Where the world puts a period, God starts a whole new story. Even when our hope feels

mostly dead, God sidles up close to us to bring us back to life! That’s what Easter is all about.

As the Apostle Paul proclaimed...

“It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. ³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

May the Risen Christ be revealed to you and through you so that faith, hope, and love will endure. May it be so. Amen.

HYMN - “In the Bulb there is a Flower” #638 v.1-3

COMMUNION - Sarah

Look around at the table you have found yourself in front of. God never promised the disciples years of celebration or excitement, just that Jesus would be present in the moments that we gathered around the table.

More than likely, Easter looks a little different this year than in any year before this. However, as I sit and write this meditation, the sun is pouring in through my front

window. There are birds chirping. Plants are budding. Life starts anew, even in the midst of crisis. Christ our Lord is risen today.

In celebration, we gather around this table to celebrate the life, death, and ascension of Jesus. We set aside our worries for a moment to fully live into the story: we recall that just earlier in our story, Jesus met with his beloveds in the upper room. He passed bread among them, blessing it, saying take and eat: this is the bread of life for the long journey ahead. In a like manner, he took the cup, blessed it, passed it among them saying take and drink, this cup is the cup of salvation. As often as you are together, do this in remembrance of me. Church, despite the distance, we are indeed together today. Join us at the Lord's table. Remember: all are welcome here, and all means all.

CLOSING HYMN - "Because He Lives" #562 v. 1-3

***BENEDICTION - Chad**

People of God I want to thank you for joining us and may your Easter be a blessed one. I leave you with these words from John van de Laar

We Go As Hope-Carriers

We thank You, Lord, for re-igniting the flame of hope within us,
for filling our hearts with light and evicting the darkness,
and for giving a new vision of Your glory.

We live now, as light-bearers to a world in darkness,
We live now, as hope-carriers to a world in despair;

We live in the name of the Risen Christ,
in the love of God
and in the power of the Spirit.
Amen.

Christ Has Died!

Christ Has Risen!

Christ will come again! And Again! And again! In every act of
compassion, forgiveness, and love as we live and move and have our being
in the one who rose again!

BENEDICTION SONG - Beth Schabel