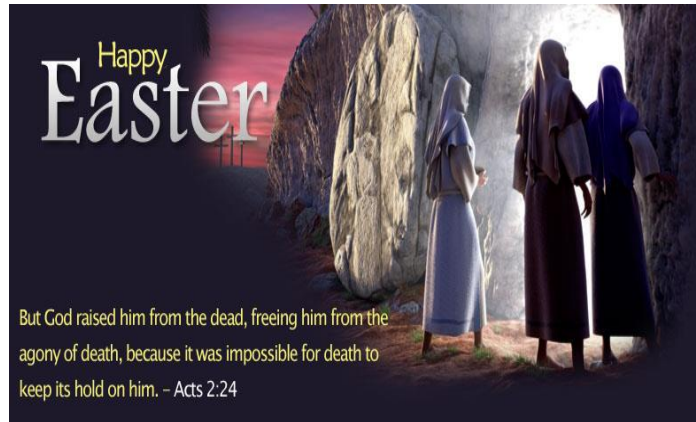


# MARCH 31, 2024 RESURRECTION SUNDAY



## ST. JOHN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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*Liturgy – Rev. Dr. Sheila Harvey*  
*Ushers –*

(NCH) New Century Hymnal CCLI LICENSE #11164431

\*Please stand if comfortably able.

Respond with words in bold print.

PLEASE TURN OFF CELL PHONES

## HE IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN, INDEED! ALLELUIA!

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

PRELUDE: “My Lord, What a Morning” Tom Fettke

**\*RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

One: We gather in the presence of God’s love to celebrate the best love story ever told.

**All: The Holy Story of the Risen Christ!**

One: A story of the Risen Christ who came as a sacrificial lamb to heal a hurting world.

**All: The Divine sign of God’s love and grace.**

One: The story of three women who rose early to care for Jesus’ body in the tomb.

**All: An act to honor God’s loving presence sent to be among us.**

One: These women arrived and saw an empty tomb; they were shocked and afraid.

**All: They remembered the symbol of human shame of the old rugged cross.**

One: But the story did not end with the crucified Jesus. An Angel of God appeared in the empty tomb, and their terror transformed into amazement.

**All: God’s love had once again been revealed.**

One: The journey of the three women continued; they were asked to go out and spread the Good News of God's love, peace, and justice found in the Risen Christ!

**All: Today, we receive this Good News; Christ is Risen. He is Risen as He said!**

**\*INVOCATION:**

Resurrecting God, strengthen in us the will to go out, sharing your Good News of God's redeeming love. Guide us in telling the story of your endless love through our words and deeds. Remind us of your presence. Fill our hearts with your ways of love that bring about peace and justice for all. With your loving embrace, protect us in the face of terror and hateful actions. Bring us your hope found in the excitement of eternal life and saving love exemplified in Jesus, the Risen Christ! Amen.

**ANTHEM: ST. JOHN CHANCEL CHOIR**

**"Sound the Trumpet" Wesley/Peterson  
Aaron Eisenhauer on Trumpet**

**CONGREGATION JOIN IN:**

**Christ the Lord is ris'n today, Alleluia!  
Sons of men and angels say: Alleluia!  
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!  
Sing ye heav'ns, and earth reply: Alleluia!**

**Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!  
Where O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!  
Once he died our souls to save; Alleluia!  
Where thy victory, O grave? Alleluia!**

**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!**

**Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!  
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!  
Made like Him, like Him we rise, Alleluia!  
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!**

**\*INVITATION TO CONFESSION:**

**\*PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**

Redeeming God, we recognize that your love for all creation is great and unmovable. All that we need on earth has been provided, and yet we struggle to share a portion of our blessings so that all might have enough. You have created an earth vast with land and sea. And yet, we embrace a narrative of scarcity. Believing that somehow there is not enough for everyone to be cared for. But the data proves otherwise. We know there is an overwhelming abundance of resources on the earth you created. Help us to choose a narrative of abundance over scarcity. Give us the strength to help make this world

a better place by embracing your agape love of equality for all creation. Let your ancient story of love be our new, innovative, and transformative story of love. The kind of love that transforms hearts, O God, and leads us towards this new way of living. May this new life speak to the kind of prosperity that overflows with your love of peace and justice for all people, everywhere!                      Silence

**\*PRAYER FOR GRACE:**

God of Grace and Glory, we are humbled by your faithfulness and love. Even if our fears spark terror and doubt, you never leave us. There is no other love greater than yours. You call upon all of creation to spread the Good News of your love and glorious light. Reminding us that your love is sweeter than the honey in the honeycomb. Comforting us even in the bitterness of life as we embrace the loving assurance of forgiveness found in Jesus Christ, whose grace and mercy bless us still.

**\*GLORIA:**

**Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (repeat two more times.) (end) One God always here. One God always here.**

**SCRIPTURE LESSON:**

**\*GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 16:1-8 the Empty tomb**

**16** When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they could go and anoint Jesus' dead body. <sup>2</sup>Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they came to the tomb. <sup>3</sup>They were saying to each other, "Who's going to roll the stone away from the entrance for us?" <sup>4</sup>When they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away. (And it was a very large stone!) <sup>5</sup>Going into the tomb, they saw a young man in a white robe seated on the right side; and they were startled. <sup>6</sup>But he said to them, "Don't be alarmed! You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.<sup>[a]</sup> He has been raised. He isn't here. Look, here's the place where they laid him. <sup>7</sup>Go, tell his disciples, especially Peter, that he is going ahead of you into Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you." <sup>8</sup>Overcome with terror and dread, they fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

These are the ancient words revealed to us anew.

**Thanks be to God. Amen.**

**MESSAGE: "The Rest of the Story" (with thoughts from William Barclay)**

Did you notice the last line I read? "They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid." It's actually the last sentence we have from the author of the Gospel of Mark. The women told NO ONE! So, what are we

doing here? If they told no one, how did we ever know who Jesus was?

For years Bible Scholars have tried to answer that question at the end of this gospel. Actually, some were so unsettled about this ending that they wrote one or several. It's obvious that what they wrote was not what the author of the Gospel of Mark wrote. The style and sentence structure are not the same.

In today's Bible this extra ending is marked in brackets or mentioned in foot notes. Another explanation is that the original writings of Mark were written in a scroll and carried to different villages and communities to be read out loud. The listeners already knew about the resurrection so they spoke it at the end even if it wasn't written in the scroll. Most scholars believe that originally there was a better ending written by Mark, but it was at the end of a scroll and got tattered and worn and was lost.

However, let's go back and talk about what IS written in this Gospel. There had not been time to render the last services to the body of Jesus. The Sabbath had intervened and the women who wished to anoint the body had not been able to do so since Jews were prohibited from doing any kind of work on the Sabbath. As early as possible after the Sabbath had passed, they set out to perform this sad task.

They were worried about one thing. Tombs had no doors. When the word door is mentioned it really means *opening*. In front of the opening was a groove,

and in the groove ran a very large circular stone. The women knew that it was quite beyond their strength to move a stone like that. But when they reached the tomb, the stone was rolled away, and inside was a messenger who gave them the unbelievable news that Jesus had risen from the dead.

One thing is certain – if Jesus had not risen from the dead, we would never have heard about him. The attitude of the women was that they had come to pay the last tribute to a dead body. The attitude of the disciples was that everything had finished in tragedy. By far the best proof of the resurrection is the existence of our Christian church right here. Nothing else could have changed sad and despairing men and women into people radiant with joy. The resurrection is the central fact of the whole Christian faith. And because we believe in the resurrection certain things follow.

- 1.) Jesus is not a figure in a book but a living presence. It is not enough to study the story of Jesus like the life of any other great historical figure. We may begin that way but we must end by meeting him.
- 2.) Jesus is not a memory but a presence. (repeat) The dearest memory fades. Long since, time would have wiped out the memory of Jesus unless he had been a living presence forever with us. Our most wonderful memories eventually fade and some parts are lost and

eventually all may be gone from our minds. Jesus is not someone to discuss so much as someone to meet.

- 3.) The Christian life is not a matter of *knowing about Jesus*, but of *knowing Jesus*. You know what I mean? There is all the difference in the world between *knowing about* a person and *knowing* a person. You may know the name of your neighbor but you don't really know anything else about them. Most people *know about* the President of the United States but not so many *know* him. The greatest scholar in the world who knows everything about Jesus is less than the humblest Christian who *knows* him.
- 4.) There is an endless quality about the Christian faith. It should never stand still. Because our Lord is a living Lord there are new wonders and new truths waiting to be discovered all the time.

We can continue knowing Jesus over and over as we watch what he has done and continues to do; from birthing a new healthy baby to a flower blooming on the wayside. If we try, we can feel his arm around us when we are distressed. If we listen very carefully, we can hear him speak to us. We can feel him in our hearts when we take communion. We can picture him when we sing wonderful, inspirational hymns.

We can see him in the smile of a friend or a child when you fulfill a need they may have.

We don't need to remember the risen Christ on this Easter. We know him because his presence is with us always. Amen.

### **HYMN: NCH 245 "The Day of Resurrection"**

**PASTORAL PRAYER:** Almighty God, Lord and Giver of Life, in the joy of this Easter morning, may we see ourselves new in the freshness of resurrection. Help us to open our reluctant spirits to the glad tidings of this day, that they may be sustained with the sacrament of the gratitude and praise. Strengthen us to live a holy life now. May we learn again to walk with eager steps, as those who have been healed, who have heard the shouts of victory, who look to the day when every worldly care dissolves and every selfish concern is crowded out by your presence. Enter our prayers so we speak as people of the resurrection who expect and hope for what they ask. Yet keep our concerns worthy of the calling to which we are called and make our flesh and our wills ready to act on your words, in the praise of God and the love of people through Jesus Christ our risen and redemptive Lord. As we pray together the prayer your Son taught us. .  
**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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

**INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:** Let us give our offerings with generosity and joy to the One who has faithfully and generously given to us love, grace, and mercy.

**OFFERTORY: “The Holy City” Stephen Adams**

**\*DOXOLOGY:**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God above you heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

**\*UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION:**

**Let us remember that weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes early in the morning. May these gifts of blessing be a sign of the love, light, and glory of our redeeming God who has created a world of abundance with all that we need. May we remain thankful for your generosity, O God, as we dedicate these offerings to you and your beloved creation.**

**HOLY COMMUNION:**

As we go into the world on this Easter Day,  
we first stop here at the table of our risen Lord.  
We were just here a few nights ago,

remembering how Jesus shared a meal with his disciples before he was arrested, but he promises to meet us here again and again and again.

This is the table of our risen Lord, the table where we remember how he gave of himself for us, the table where we share the great feast of earth and heaven even now, the table where we can expect to meet Jesus.

Where is Jesus?

He is here, waiting for us, inviting us to share this holy feast once again so that we might be strengthened to meet him again and again along the way.

So whoever you are, wherever you have been, come and celebrate this holy feast on this Easter day, because Jesus is here and invites us to join him in this feast which he has prepared.

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

On this Easter Day, O God, we can do nothing but sing your praise. Just three days ago we thought that the story was over, and we never could have imagined what we see today.

While you gave up your Son to death, you did not

let death have the last word. In Christ you overcame the power of death, raising him to new life and destroying death once and for all.

All that you have said and all that you have done lead us to this place, to this celebration of new life and this promise that there is still more yet in store for us.

We can do nothing but give you thanks and praise for the life you have given us and the life that lies ahead.

So with grateful hearts, we join with the choirs of earth and heaven to sing your praise:

**SANCTUS: NCH 790**

**Holy, holy, holy God of love and majesty.  
The whole universe speaks of your glory, O God Most High. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of our God! Hosanna in the highest.**

**STORY OF THE MEAL:**

In this meal, we remember Jesus, his promises, and the price he paid for who he was, what he said, and what he did; for our benefit.

On the night before Jesus died,  
He took a loaf of bread, Gave thanks, broke it, and said, "Take and eat, this is my body, given for you. Do this, in remembrance of me."  
After supper, Jesus took the cup and poured, saying,

"This is the cup of the new covenant, poured out for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me."

Presider places cup on the table

In sharing this meal, we live out the mystery of our faith:

**We remember Christ's life of love, and friendship, and teaching, We remember Christ's dying, and rising to life again.**

**PRAYER TO THE SPIRIT:**

Bless this bread and this cup, the wheat and the grape, the farmer and the harvest, the seed and the sower.

These simple elements are shared in community, so that we may taste and see your goodness and become one body in Christ.

For it is through Christ, in Christ, and with Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, that all glory is yours, God most holy, now and forevermore. Amen.

**SHARING THE ELEMENTS**

**\*UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:**

**O Christ, we thank you for this feast of life.  
Fed by your love, and strengthened by your life;  
we humbly accept your call to go into this world to live with hope, and to share your joy.  
You commission us to feed as we have been fed,**

**forgive as we have been forgiven, and love as we have been loved. Thanks be to God. Amen.**

**\*HYMN: NCH 242 “The Strife is O’er**

**\*BENEDICTION:**

May God’s abiding love and hope give us new life.  
May God’s unmerited grace and mercy keep us hope-filled. And may God’s restorative justice bring to us all, perfect peace.

For Christ is risen and remains with us! Praise God!

**Hallelujah!**

**BENEDICTION RESPONSE:**

**“Let There Be Peace on Earth”**

**POSTLUDE: “Low in the Grave” Lani Smith**