

## Easter Sunday Home Service , 2020

**Opening words from Casey Kerins. Maybe for once we celebrate Easter differently. Maybe we celebrate the Resurrection just as the disciples did. Alone, in the silence, hoping the faith outweighs the fear**

Opening music. VU 155 Jesus Christ is risen today [Huddersfield Choral Society]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hRKKmAsfOw>

**Opening Prayer On the dawning of this Easter morning, we emerge from the great silence of Holy Saturday. We carry in our hearts many a sad story- about Jesus' last days, about human history, about our own lives, about pandemic. We long for better days to come- and meanwhile we need to remember the greater story of which we are part., a story that did not end with Good Friday. And so our eyes are open to signs of new life. Out of the shadows we journey into this gathering place. We seek light and hope and new life. Together, may we glimpse a happier story. Together – like your beloved of old- may we remember who we are: Easter people , here to help Easter keep happening, no matter what. May we catch the vision afresh today. May what we receive warm our hearts and lift our spirits. Amen.**

### Easter Readings

**Poem. Spring by Mary Oliver *I selected this reading because for me it says: Spring is not easy. Easter is not easy. We too may be dragging ourselves out from a nest of darkness- we too might feel the winter has been forever- and when will we feel the warmth of sun. And perhaps we feel like this is still Holy Saturday- it's a dark night and how do we get to the morning? How was it for Jesus, Mary Oliver wonders.***

**And here is the serpent again,  
Dragging himself out from his nest of darkness,  
His cave under the black rocks,  
His winter-death.**

He slides over the pine needles.

He loops around the bunches of rising grass,  
Looking for the sun.

Well, who doesn't want the sun after the long winter?

I step aside.

He feels the earth with his soft tongue,  
Around the bones of his body he moves like oil.

Downhill he goes

Toward the black mirrors of the pond.

Last night it was still as cold.

I woke and went out to stand in the yard,  
And there was no moon.

So I just stood there, inside the jaw of nothing.

An owl cried in the distance.

I thought of Jesus, how he

Crouched in the dark for two nights,

Then floated back above the horizon.

Mark 16:1-8 Mark's Easter story

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were

alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

### Reflection from Jane

Often I've asked myself- how do we get from Good Friday to Easter? Good Friday is all too real- the story is told 4 times over in heart wrenching detail- And we believe it- because such stories still happen in our world- we see them on the news again and again.

And when Jesus is buried- many loved ones have been buried- we have been at that graveside- we too have mourned- And the mourning is not over in 2 days. How could it be?

When Jesus has been buried, the Gospel story falls silent. Holy Saturday- nothing/ And after all that was Jewish sabbath. There wasn't supposed to be anything . It was time to be home - especially in this the season of Passover.

And then the women come to the tomb to pay their respects as was the custom/ And the tomb is empty. And they hear "Jesus is risen". Who can explain that? No one. Though scholars have spilled ink trying.

The women could not get there. It made no sense. Fear overtook them. That happens when things make no sense, we can't get our minds around them, the world around us has got out of control.

And so for you and me today mid-pandemic- So much makes no sense, we can't keep up with it, our world is out of control- the way we are living these days is confusing, unsettling, exhausting. We have anxiety going on- and more than that , grief!

How do we get to Easter when Easter is not like Easter? No men's club breakfast in Scotch Ridge. No Easter egg hunts in St Andrews. And

worse- empty churches- And many of us cut off from our loved ones or friends- perhaps no one to share Easter dinner. And , just when everything around us is usually waking up and getting going, our world has ground to a halt - while the pandemic updates go on relentlessly, and we no longer know what the difference is between one day and another. A sabbath- if you like, that won't quit.

Where is spring? Where is new life? When will we see those better days?

Well, here's my take. I picked Mark's Easter story because it speaks to where we are-Easter feels like it is not there yet- and that's OK-

Easter is not a one- day wonder- it's a process, unfolding, evolving- over time. Forty days- the story goes- forty days can feel like a lot of days, as many as Jesus spent alone in the wilderness. New life blossoms slowly by times- and the seeds may well germinate unseen for many a week.

So while we wait for Easter to declare ourselves, do we have to remain in the Holy Saturday shadows? Well, no- because Easter is a story bigger than the pandemic-Easter has surrounded us for millennia- We are Easter people, resurrected people-

I was in a seminar the other day online- I must have a lot of nerve these days as I dared to ask the eminent scholar John Dominic Crossan a question- Normally I would not have the nerve to speak to someone so much more learned than I will ever be.

I asked him "How do we get from Good Friday to Easter this year ?" And his answer : "If you wait till Easter Sunday to do that, it's too late. You can't do it. You should have been talking about it all along."

It came to me- well, surely , I have , we have been talking about Easter, One way or another. Because after all we don't spend all our time grieving and lamenting, even though that's part of all our lives. We do believe in new life, new hope, transformation.

We as small churches could have given up and died years ago. After all , many churches big and small have. But we've not given in to fear or worry or discouragement . We have believed church as we knew it, life as we knew it, could fall away. And yet amazing things could still happen- And amazing things have happened, are happening, will happen.

I was reading about this in the Living faith stories you are sending out to attract new ministers- And- it might take longer with everything happening- but that new chapter with a new minister will come- someone who will sense all the new life already here , with more resurrections yet to come.

Just as the pandemic won't be forever- we won't say forever buried in our houses by ourselves. We will be in our Sunday worship space. Choirs and congregations will sing again. We will one day have guests again in our homes, , our communities.

Meanwhile, we tell ourselves. We are resurrected people- We have seen new life and we will see it again. We have emerged out of dark night before and seen the dawn- and so we will again.

Resurrection is at work- as at that first Easter- long before anyone can see it or believe it. And we will unpack what this is- this resurrection- all the 40 days of Easter this year- and we will find the hope, the strength, the joy that has been in us all the time.

Let me finish by reading a resurrection poem by Rainer Maria Rilke- translated by Stephen Mitchell.

It is full of the regeneration, the vitality, the resilience and the sheer joy built into earth- the earth which knows both death and transformation- the earth which is God's gift of home to us- the earth which reminded Jesus of God's unending creativity and care no matter what.

Creativity shown forth in us as we adapt - even as we made it here today- Care shown forth as we reach out in love in whatever way we can- Being that community which is no stranger to resurrection

Here is the poem-

Spring has returned. The earth resembles

A little girl who has memorized

Many poems.... For all the trouble

Of her long learning, she wins the prize.

Her teacher was strict. We loved the white

In the old man's beard and shaggy eyebrows.

Now whenever we ask about

The blue and green, she knows, she knows!

Earth, overjoyed to be out on vacation,

Play with the children. We long to catch up,

Jubilant Earth. The happiest will win.

What her teacher has taught her , the numberless Things,

And what lies hidden in stem and in deep,

Difficult root, she sings, she sings!

And so let us too sing:

Easter Hymn Joy comes with the dawn, 166 VU sung by Grace United Church Choir, Dartmouth NS

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71\\_8S-tcj\\_I&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71_8S-tcj_I&feature=youtu.be)

Offering Prayer

**Blessed and blessing One, again and again your good news appears before us, opening our minds and hearts, calling us to share that good news in word and deed. We respond in joyful thanks, sharing our gifts. With brave spirits and generous hearts may we be messengers of hope- shining Light and Love and Compassion all around your beloved world. Amen**

Easter Prayer

*(Adapted from Wayne Arnason]*

Spirit of Life,

How easy it is to speak your name and offer this prayer at this season of re-birth and renewal!!

The spirit of life is everywhere, evident in each new bud and shoot. We pray that our lives may be blessed with that same renewal we see all around us in nature's annual celebration.

We ask that our eyes may be opened to gifts and companions that are part of our journey whom we may be taking for granted. It is easy to walk the way of life with our eyes on the road ahead, and to forget to look over into the eyes of those who share the way with us. Whether they are friends, family, or partners, it is good to remember that the Holy Spirit can be found in familiar and unexpected people and places.

The last place we expect to find that spirit is in the tomb within ourselves where hopes and possibilities have lain buried, killed by time and circumstance and potential unfulfilled. Maybe that tomb is empty today. Maybe those hopes and possibilities walk beside you. Maybe something unexpected and unheard of awaits you in this season.

Be with us, Spirit of Life, and help us to be open and awake to the springtime miracle that is in each one of us.

We pause in silent witness to these hopes and aspirations even amid today's struggles.

We hold in our hearts those for whom this is a difficult Easter- those working in the frontlines, those who are ill from COVID-19 or other diseases, those alone in hospitals or care homes and their loved ones who cannot be with them, those grieving loss of loved ones, those waiting out this season at home alone.

In a moment of silence we hold in love and light those who need our prayers-- and we seek that same love and light for ourselves in our places of need. These prayers we gather into the prayer shared by your Beloved and shared by beloved communities around the world and across the ages: Our Father ...

Announcements [see email to which this service was attached]

Easter Hymn Thine is the glory 173VU [St Mary's Church, Portsea] words are provided on screen

<https://youtu.be/GaoV5w2Qfag>

Blessing

Go from here, knowing that God's gift of new life is yours,

knowing the joy that runs deeper than sorrow, guided by that light which can never be put out.

And may Creative Love, Holy Wisdom and Compassionate Spirit raise you up- as healers, as hope-bearers, as messengers of good news, today and always.