

Emmanuel United Church of Christ

Welcomes YOU on this Easter Sunday

We are warmed by your presence among us this day

Service Liturgy – March 31, 2024 9:30 AM

James Cope, Pastor Janice Garinger, Pastor in Care

Gathering around the Word



Gathering in the Darkness and Silence

The Lighting of the Paschal Candle

Leader: We have come together again to celebrate the occasion of great joy when our Lord passed from death to life. This is the Passover of our Lord. When the Jewish people were living in bondage under the Egyptians, the angel “passed over,” bringing life and freedom to the enslaved people of Israel. Today is our Passover—a Passover from enslavement to death to life eternal. We honor our Lord’s death and resurrection, confident that Jesus has called us to share in his victory and to live with him forever. We light this Paschal candle, which reminds us of the Lamb, the Lamb of God, the Easter Lamb. May his light shine eternally into our lives.

All: God, we share in the light of your glory through your Son, the Eternal Light and Life of the world. Make this new fire holy, and enflame us with new hope. Strengthen us by the Easter celebration, and bring us all one day to the feast of your eternal light, through Jesus Christ our Lord, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Amen.

Leader: Through the light of the Paschal candle, we proclaim Jesus Christ, the Eternal Light of the world. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. To him be all the glory and the praise!

All: May this light of Christ dispel the darkness in our lives and enflame us with new life, new faith, and new hope. Amen.

The Procession of Light into the Sanctuary

To be repeated three times during the procession...

Leader: Christ our light.

All: Thanks be to God.

Prelude

Leader: Grace to you from Jesus Christ, who was, and is, and is to come. Hear the word of God: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. In the Word was life, and the life was the light of all humanity. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

*Call to Worship

Leader: This is the day:

All: when tears are wiped away; shattered hearts are mended; fears are replaced with joy.

Leader: This is the day the Lord:

All: rolls away the stone of fear; throws off death’s clothes; goes ahead of us into God’s future.

Leader: This is the day the Lord has made:

All: death has no fear for us; sin has lost its power over us; God opens the tombs of our hearts to fill us with life.

***THE EASTER PROCLAMATION**

Leader: This is the day...Easter Day!

All: CHRIST THE LORD IS RISEN TODAY!

The Light Returns and Ringing of the Bells

*Hymn

“Christ the Lord is Risen Today”

#233 (NCH)

Call to Confession

A Unison Prayer of Confession

We think this story is so old, imaginative God, that we cannot hear the astonishing news of triumph over death. We are so afraid of our own shadows, that we cannot see the Light of life which is streaming all around us. Convinced that there is nothing beyond these days we call life, we cannot sense your resurrection hope which is calling to us by our names. On this day of new wonders and everlasting grace, God of our lives, may we be glad that you have not forgotten us. May we rejoice in the ancient promises which are proclaimed afresh this morning. May we turn with our questions, our doubts, and our hearts towards Jesus, the Gardener of grace, who calls us by name and pours resurrection love into us. Amen.

(Silence is kept for personal reflection and prayer)

Assurance of Pardon

Leader: On this Easter, as on the first; on this day, as on every day; God turns to us, calls us by name and plants forgiveness and hope in our lives.

All: Alleluia! This is the good news! Christ is our peace, the peace we need, the peace which will heal the world. Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Amen!

*Choral Response

“Yours Is the Glory, Resurrected One!”

#253 (NCH)

Listening for the Word

A Time with the Children

Prayer for Illumination

The Scripture Readings

The Old Testament Lesson Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24

The Gospel Lesson John 20: 1-18

Sermon

“Bend Low”

James Cope

Hymn

“I Know That My Redeemer Lives!”

#Insert

Responding to the Word

Call to Offering

Offertory

***Offertory Response**

“Doxology”

#780 (NCH)

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.

***Prayer of Dedication**

Thank you, God, for the gift of this amazing day of resurrection! Our hearts are overflowing with the joy and excitement of Easter. We pray that you will take our exuberance and use it to bring light and hope to those trapped in darkness and despair. Use these gifts of money to empower our work with those who have not yet seen the risen Lord in their midst. Use the gift of our very lives to empower our calling to carry your love into the world. We pray this with the boldness of those who have encountered the living Christ. Amen.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

Bearing the Word into the World

***Hymn**

“Alleluia! Gracious Jesus!”

#257(NCH)

***Charge and Benediction**

Leader: Do not look for the risen Jesus only here, in the confines of this church building.

All: We will seek the risen Jesus on the roads and in the streets, in all the pathways and byways of our lives.

Leader: Do not seek comfort in the familiar, but dare to risk the unfamiliar -

All: We know that Resurrection makes all things new!

Leader: Do not cling to all the old, expected notions about God, Jesus, Spirit, but go forth and celebrate this truly Good News:

All: Because Christ lives, new possibilities are ever before us!

Leader: Christ is Risen indeed!

All: ALLELUIA and AMEN!

***Three-fold Amen**

#812(NCH)

*Postlude

*Indicates that all who are able. Please stand. **Bold** print indicates unison reading.