

Thank you for serving your church in this way and for sharing God's word with your sisters and brothers. A few reminders:

- Practice the readings beforehand.
- Please arrive at least ten minutes before your scheduled service. "A Guide to Pronouncing Biblical Names" book is located in the Pastor's Sacristy, the small room on the right hand side at the front of the Sanctuary. If, after consulting the book, you still need help with any pronunciations, Pastor can help you.
- You may sit in one of the right-side altar chairs until it is time to read, or you may come forward prior to the Prayer of the Day.
- When speaking, please project your voice and make sure you are speaking as loudly and clearly as possible.
- The lessons may be introduced simply by saying,
"The Old Testament Reading is from the number chapter of book."
After the lesson the reader says, "The Word of the Lord." And congregation responds, "Thanks be to God."
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Thank you again for serving. Your contribution to worship is appreciated by all!

INTRODUCTION

In spite of all we have heard and all that we have seen, it is often hard to believe. Because it is hard to believe, we will invest ourselves in the Easter mystery for fifty days (a week of weeks). Because it is hard to believe, John the evangelist will provide sign after sign celebrating Jesus' victory over death. Because it is hard to believe, the Lord Jesus will return to us again and again in the mystery of the holy communion, inviting us to touch and taste his presence, and offering us his peace.

PRAYER OF THE DAY (ELW)

O God of life, you reach out to us amid our fears with the wounded hands of your risen Son. By your Spirit's breath revive our faith in your mercy, and strengthen us to be the body of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

OLD TESTAMENT READING Acts 5:27–32

Peter has been arrested for proclaiming the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection. His response to the charges of the high priest summarizes the early church's proclamation of forgiveness of sin through repentance.

²⁷When they had brought them, they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, ²⁸saying, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man's blood on us." ²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than any human authority. ³⁰The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³²And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."

☞ The Word of the Lord. ☞ Thanks be to God.

PSALM: 118:14–29

¹⁴The LORD is my strength¹ and my song,
and he has become¹ my salvation.

¹⁵**There is a sound of exulta-¹ tion and victory
in the tents¹ of the righteous:**

¹⁶"The right hand of the¹ LORD has triumphed!
The right hand of the LORD is exalted! The right hand of the¹ LORD has triumphed!"

¹⁷**I shall not¹ die, but live,
and declare the works¹ of the LORD.**

¹⁸The LORD has pun-¹ished me sorely,
but he did not hand me o-¹ver to death.

¹⁹**Open for me the¹ gates of righteousness;
I will enter them; I will offer thanks¹ to the LORD.**

²⁰"This is the gate¹ of the LORD;
he who is right-¹eous may enter."

²¹**I will give thanks to you, for you¹ answered me
and have become¹ my salvation.**

²²The same stone which the build-¹ers rejected
has become the chief¹ cornerstone.

²³**This is¹ the LORD's doing,
and it is marvelous¹ in our eyes.**

²⁴On this day the ^lLORD has acted;
 we will rejoice and be ^lglad in it.
²⁵**Hosanna, ^lLORD, hosanna!**
LORD, send us ^lnow success.
²⁶Blessed is he who comes in the name ^lof the Lord;
 we bless you from the house ^lof the LORD.
²⁷**God is the LORD; he has ^lshined upon us;**
form a procession with branches up to the horns ^lof the altar.
²⁸"You are my God, and ^lI will thank you;
 you are my God, and I ^lwill exalt you."
²⁹**Give thanks to the LORD, for ^lhe is good;**
his mercy en- ^ldures forever.

NEW TESTAMENT READING Revelation 1:4–8

The book of Revelation recounts a mystical vision of the risen Christ, experienced by a Christian prophet named John. Here he describes Christ as a timeless redeemer, the beginning, present, and end of all time.

⁴John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

⁷Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen.

⁸I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

☞ The Word of the Lord. ☞ Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL: John 20:19–31

The unprecedented events of the day of resurrection continue as the risen Jesus appears to his fearful disciples. A week later, after Thomas worships Jesus, Jesus pronounces that the blessings of the resurrection are also for those who "have not seen and yet believe."

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." ²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Rejoicing in the glory of the resurrection dawn, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of God's creation.

*(Responses are: Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**)*

- God of life, we pray for the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, and especially for all the newly baptized. By your Spirit, empower us to be witnesses to the empty tomb.
- We pray for rainforests and deserts, mountains and tundra, rivers and grasslands, and all creatures that call this planet home. Breathe healing on our earth.
- We pray for all the nations, especially those torn by violence and oppression. Send wisdom to all state and local leaders. Teach peace to our war-weary world.
- We pray for the homeless and hungry, the sick and the dying, the abused and the neglected. Comfort all who suffer, and calm our fears.
- We pray for our community and our congregation, the old and the young. Renew us this Easter season, and send us out to be bread for a hungry world. We pray especially for six families in our faith community this week (names).

Bless their lives, lead them in their faith walks, and bring them to everlasting life.

- We give you thanks for all the saints who have gone before us and who taught us to believe.

Into your hands, O God, we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray, trusting in your abundant mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen**

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