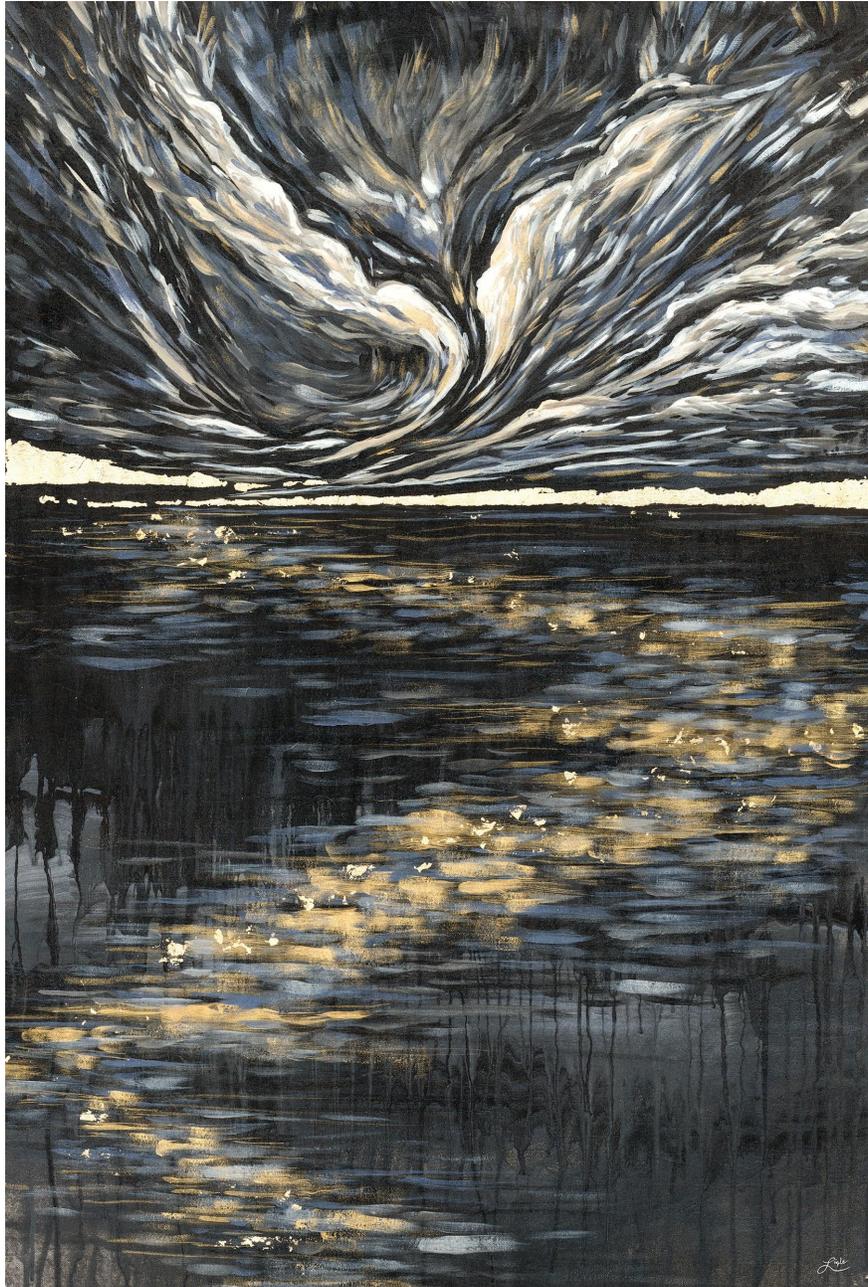


MAROONDAH FELLOWSHIP OF CHURCHES

EASTER SUNRISE 2021

AN AT HOME LITURGY



THE PROMISE by Lisle Gwynn Garrity inspired by Mark 16:1-8

About this Liturgy

*Adapted by Rev Lucas Taylor (Ringwood Uniting Church) from Liturgy by Sarah Are
A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org*

We all have our own traditions around Easter—egg hunts, family lunches, camping trips and meaningful worship. For many this year, those traditions are still disrupted, and yet, we believe that just like every Easter before, the sun will rise, and new life will emerge.

This year we invite you to carve out some sacred space in the comfort of your own home, in a public park, or around your campfire to recognize the holiness of this day.

This is a simple liturgy for your own personal Easter Sunrise service. Why sunrise? Every year, thousands of people celebrate Easter at sunrise because the women discovered the empty tomb early in the morning, “while it was still dark” (John 20:1). Therefore, we invite and challenge you to be like these brave biblical women, to rise in the dark and to watch the sun rise over it.

You may wish to join in a live streamed dawn service hosted by the Ringwood Church of Christ on their facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/RingwoodChurchOfChrist>

Please note - Sunrise is expected at 6.35am on April 4th in Ringwood.

Supplies

- A candle, matches or a lighter
- Comfy clothes (*pajamas permitted!*)
- A blanket (*if it's chilly*)
- Something warm to drink (*this is optional, but if you're getting up for sunrise, you deserve coffee!*)

LITURGY

OPENING | Light a Candle & Settle In

As you start your morning, head outside! Find a comfortable place to settle in and watch the sunrise. Watch from a front porch, a porch swing, a picnic table in your backyard, or a big front window if it's too cold out. Even if you can't see the horizon, find a spot where you can watch the lightening sky.

Once there, light a candle. Allow this candle lighting to be a spiritual reminder that this place is a place set apart. This is a moment set apart, for even though the sun will rise, we, like the women at the tomb, begin our journey in the dark. Allow the flame to remind you that even in the darkest times, love and light find a way.

Tip for young families: Invite children to play a role by either lighting the candle or deciding where you will sit. If you have multiple children, allow one child to light the candle, one to decide where it is going to be placed, and one to blow the candle out. Alternatively, you might light one stable and sturdy candle for each kid.

GATHERING

This day is like every other day.

Alarm clocks beeped. Covers were removed.
Coffee was brewed. Weary bodies came to life.

And yet this day, is like no other day—

For the sun rose, and we knew it was a miracle.
The tomb was empty, and they knew it was love.

So again and again we say—

The longest night is over. Death has lost its sting. Jesus is among us.
Alleluia! Amen.

Friends, had we been there that first Easter morning,
It is likely that many of us would have been with the disciples—
Hiding out in fear,
Locked behind doors,
Alone with our thoughts in the upper room.
I wish I could say that I would have gone with the women,
That I would have been brave and determined.
I wish I could say that I would have held onto my faith,
But the truth is, we'll never know.
What I do know is that Jesus came back for all of us—

Not the few who had maintained faith
Or the few who stayed with him until the end.
He came back for the broken and the afraid,
For the cowardly and the greedy,
For the women in the garden,
And for the disciples hiding in the upper room.
He came back for those who betrayed him
And those who worshiped him.
He came back for you and for me.

POEM | "Light" by Sarah Are

Read the following poem a few times through as a centering prayer.

Circle words that stand out to you. Pay attention to what visuals come to mind.

In Italian, the phrase, "to give birth"
Literally means, "to bring into the light."
A mother will labor for hours and days,
Breaking herself for you,
Whispering between fractured breaths,
"This is my body, broken for you."
A mother will do this as long as it takes
So that you, her beloved,
Have a chance at life.
So that you, her beloved,
Can feel the warmth of the light.
And after all that pain,
The sun will rise.
The doctor will put a baby on her chest.
The mother will hold her child as if
Letting go is indeed physically impossible.
She will breathe easy,
And then she will whisper softly,
"All this time,
All these deep breaths...
It was love, again and again and again."
It is childbirth,
But it is also resurrection.
A body broken.
Breath fractured.

A long night.
A sunrise.
Breath returned.
New life,
And a love that won't let go.
Friends, maybe Easter is just God whispering,
"All this time,
All these deep breaths...
It's been love, again and again and again."
I think we've been standing in the light all this time.
Now that I think of it, isn't it warm?

READ | Mark 16:1-8

Read Mark 16:1-8 out loud. As you read, pick out a word or phrase that stands out to you. Share that word or phrase with those around you, or jot it down in the margins of your bible.

Tip for young families: Sometimes it helps children to have something specific to listen for in the scripture reading. You might encourage children to follow a particular character in particular, eg. How do they begin this scene? How do they finish it?

Mark 16:1-8

16:1 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.

16:2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.

16:3 They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?"

16:4 When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back.

16:5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

16:6 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.

16:7 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."

16:8 So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid.

REFLECT | Discussion or Journaling

Reflect on the following prompts. You can either jot these down in a journal, mull them over in your mind as the sun rises, or discuss them with family members present.

- 1) What are your Easter morning traditions? Why is this morning special to you? What feels different about this morning this year?
- 2) There are many emotions present in this story—fear, hope, grief, disbelief, awe. What emotions are you feeling today? Put words to those emotions. Share with your family or write them down.
- 3) When the “young man” in white speaks to Mary he seems to already know what/who she is looking for. What is something you are looking for in your faith journey, in your life, in your relationships, or in your own self-growth?
- 4) This passage concludes with their departure from the tomb after receiving the instruction to head back to Galilee. What movement are you being called to?

Additional questions for families:

- 1) Why do we celebrate Easter? What is special about this day? What are some of your favorite Easter traditions?
- 2) In this Easter story, the disciples are told that Jesus is not in the tomb, but is instead going on ahead to where they need to follow. They are told to return to the region of Jesus’ ministry. Can getting involved with good works (helping and loving people) help us move past times of sadness and confusion?

COMMENTARY ON MARK 16:1-8 | By Rev. T. Denise Anderson

Do we ever consider the mechanics of a sunrise? The earth spinning at 1000 mph, traveling an orbit of 584 million miles around a star that’s about 1 million times the size of our planet is dizzying. But because we’ve come to expect sunrises every day,

we're not always impressed by them. Often we sleep right through them. That doesn't make them any less awesome or miraculous.

Easter is as familiar to Christians as a sunrise. We know the story—at least one variation—and we likely expect to greet the day the same way every year. But if we've been sitting in the tension of last week, we may be able to experience this day differently.

Mark's gospel is, again, straightforward. There are no frills in this resurrection account. There's not much joy in it, either. Sunday morning was a time of profound grief for those closest to Jesus. Consider those first few days after you've lost someone and the liminality between their death and funeral. There's no closure yet, and mornings are reminders that the nightmare is real. It's hard to imagine how you'll face the day.

Friday's terror gives way to new terror as the women arrive to find the stone removed and a strange young man with an outlandish story. Remember that nothing about this sight is recognizable to them. This isn't comforting. They run away terrified, unable to even speak of what they saw!

But resurrection still came, even if they weren't yet able to receive it. Things can be scary and okay at the same time.

Again and again, the sun rises on a new day, often without embrace or acknowledgment. The same is true of resurrection. Whether or not we discern what's happening, God is literally and figuratively turning the world around!

POEM | Sunrise by Mary Oliver

You can
die for it-
an idea,
or the world. People
have done so,
brilliantly,
letting
their small bodies be bound
to the stake,
creating
an unforgettable
fury of light. But

this morning,
climbing the familiar hills
in the familiar
fabric of dawn, I thought
of China,
and India
and Europe, and I thought
how the sun
blazes
for everyone just
so joyfully
as it rises
under the lashes
of my own eyes, and I thought
I am so many!
What is my name?
What is the name
of the deep breath I would take
over and over
for all of us? Call it
whatever you want, it is
happiness, it is another one
of the ways to enter
fire.

PRAY | Gratitude Prayer

Easter is a day of new beginnings and new life. It is a day for hope and love that overflows. It is a day of gratitude for the days we've had and the days to come. It is a day where we remember that love is stronger than hate, and death does not have the last word. Therefore, it only seems appropriate to take a moment to practice gratitude.

Listen to the birds chirping. Take a moment to appreciate the rising sun, and as you do, write down a list of ten things you are grateful for. Allow this practice to be a prayer.

Tip for young families: If your children aren't yet able to write on their own, consider making a gratitude list as a family. Feel free to extend beyond 10 things and instead try to write down as many things as you can think of that you are grateful for, making sure each person in the family has an opportunity to share. Another option would be to turn this exercise into a game by going around in a

circle and inviting each person to add one thing to the list. The trick is, you can't say something that has already been said!

SENDING |

We know the fear of the upper room.
We know the feeling of hard days and long nights.
We know the grief of the tomb,
And the particular ache of saying goodbye.
We know the pain of Good Friday,
And we know the darkness before dawn.
And still,
And still,
We believe.

We believe that again and again,
The sun will rise.
Again and again,
God will draw near.
Again and again,
We will march toward justice.
Again and again,
The tomb will be empty.
Again and again,
Love will win.
Again and again,
God will lead the church.
Again and again,
And again and again,
We will be loved.

The journey will not be perfect.
We will need to rise before dawn.
We will need angels along the way.
But again and again,
The sun will rise.
We believe. Amen.

He is Risen! He is Risen! Go in peace to love and serve the risen Lord.