



*A Service of Worship for  
Easter Sunday  
12 April 2020*

Easter as the reversal of Good Friday  
means God's vindication of Jesus' passion  
for the kingdom of God;

for God's justice, and God's "no"  
to the powers who killed him,

powers still very much active in our world.

Easter is about God even as it is about Jesus.

Easter discloses the character of God.

Easter means God's Great Cleanup of the world has begun -

but it will not happen without us.

Good Friday and Easter, death and resurrection together,

are a central image in the New Testament  
for the path to a transformed self.

The path involves dying to an old way of being  
and being reborn into a new way of being.

Good Friday and Easter are about the path of  
dying and rising, of being born again.

After Jesus speaks for the first time about his  
impending death and resurrection,

he says, "If any want to become my followers,  
let them deny themselves

and take up their cross and follow me."

(Mark 8:34), thus pointing to participants in his path.

It is the path of transformation that

Paul had experienced when he

wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ;

it is no longer I who live,

but it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:19-20)

Dominic Crossan and Marcus Borg

Preparing for worship with silence  
Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!  
**And also with you!**

Ringling in the hour  
Silence is kept  
Prelude

“Fugue in Eb Major”

J.S. Bach

Call to Worship  
Hymn

“This Easter Celebration”

This Easter celebration is not like ones we've known.  
We pray in isolation, we sing the hymns alone.  
We're distant from our neighbors — from worship leaders, too.  
No flowers grace the chancel to set a festive mood.

No gathered choirs are singing; no banners lead the way.  
O God of love and promise, where's joy this Easter Day?  
With sanctuaries empty, may homes become the place  
we ponder resurrection and celebrate your grace.

Our joy won't come from worship that's in a crowded room  
but from the news of women who saw the empty tomb.  
Our joy comes from disciples who ran with haste to see —  
who heard that Christ is risen, and then, by grace, believed.

In all the grief and suffering, may we remember well:  
Christ suffered crucifixion and faced the powers of hell.  
Each Easter bears the promise: Christ rose that glorious day!  
Now nothing in creation can keep your love away.

We thank you that on Easter, your church is blessed to be  
a scattered, faithful body that's doing ministry.  
In homes and in the places of help and healing, too,  
we live the Easter message by gladly serving you.

<sup>+</sup>Opening Sentences

**God of Love,**

**May I not forget I have a heart - to love a broken world.**

**May I not forget I have a voice - to speak out for the poor.**

**May I not forget I have hands - to reach out to other people.**

**May I not forget I have feet - to go where I am needed.**

**Let me never forget**

**You will be with me**

**Always.**

Scripture Lesson

John 20:1-18

These are our sacred stories.

**Thanks be to God.**

Time for Children

+Response:

Tallis' Canon

*Go with us, Lord, guide the way  
Through this and every coming day,  
That in your spirit strong and true  
Our lives may be our gift to you.*

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**If you are looking for a blessing,  
do not linger here.**

**Here is only emptiness, a hollow, a husk  
Where a blessing used to be.**

**This blessing was not content in its confinement.  
It could not abide its isolation, the unrelenting silence,  
the pressing stench of death.**

**So if it is a blessing you seek, open your own mouth.**

**Fill your lungs with the air this new morning brings  
and then release it with a cry.**

**Hear how the blessing breaks forth in your own voice,  
how your own lips form every word you never dreamed to say.**

Words of Assurance

Music

Ken Heitshusen

“Now the Green Blade Rises”

Silent reflection

Proclamation

“When you go out and see the empty streets, the empty stadiums, the empty train platforms,  
don’t say to yourself, “My God, it looks like the end of the world.”

What you’re seeing is love in action.

What you’re seeing, in that negative space, is how much we do care for each other, for our  
grandparents, for our immuno-compromised brothers and sisters, for people we will never meet.

People will lose jobs over this. Some will lose businesses. And some will lose their lives.

All the more reason to take a moment, when you’re out on your walk, on your way to the store,  
or just watching the news, to look into the emptiness and marvel at all that love.

Let it fill you and sustain you. It isn’t the end of the world. It’s the most remarkable act of global  
solidarity we may ever witness.

It is the reason the world will go on.”

Bill Gates

Invitation

+Prayer of Dedication

**Living God, astound us once more with signs of your presence.  
In the withered corners of our love, amaze us with small, swelling buds.  
In the dead center of our despair, astonish us with tender shoots of hope.  
Across the barren fields of betrayal, let our bewildered eyes  
open to the greeting of forgiveness.  
Into the frozen certainties of our endings, breathe warmth, that faith again  
may flower and exude the honey-damp fragrance of life.  
All praise and thanks to you, surprising God. Amen.**

\*Doxology

Old Hundredth

**Praise God the Source of life and birth.  
Praise God the Word, who came to earth.  
Praise God the Spirit, holy flame,  
All glory, honor to God’s name! Amen.**

+Affirmation of Faith

**If we say we believe in the resurrection  
it only has meaning if we are people  
who believe in the possibility  
of transformed lives, transformed attitudes,  
and transformed societies.**

**The action is the proof of the belief.**

**I can say I believe...because I see resurrections now,  
see stones rolled away and new possibilities  
rising from old attitudes.**

Music

Margaret Bond

“He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands”

Benediction

Postlude

J.S. Bach

“Christ Lay in Death’s Bonds”

### Worship Notes

The acolyte lights the candles at the beginning of worship and carries the light out at the close of worship.

The worship leader is **Beverly Rodgers**.

The prelude is played by Patrick Parker, organ.

The Call to Worship is an excerpt from e.e. cumming’s poem, “I thank You God for MOST THIS amazing day.”

"This Easter Celebration" is by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, and is sung by **Joyce Courtois**, alto.

The Opening Sentences are from “Passion Sunday” by Beth Richardson, reprinted in *Imaging the Word, Volume I*, edited by Kenneth T. Lawrence.

The Unison Confession is by Jan Richardson.

“Now the Green Blade Rises” is sung by Covenant singers.

The Prayer of Dedication is “Signs of Life” from *The Well is Deep: Prayers to Draw Up Living Water* by Virginia Rickerman.

The Affirmation of Faith is adapted from *Doubts and Loves: What is Left of Christianity* by Richard Holloway.

"He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands" is sung by Dana Guidroz, soprano.

The postlude is played by Patrick Parker, organ.

The flowering cross is found in Christian art as early as the sixth century and is based on a legend that says that the cross itself burst into bloom at the moment that Jesus died. The legend of the True Cross describes how the wood of the cross came from a tree that sprang from a seed taken from the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. A modern expression of this idea may be found in the custom of flowering the cross. On Easter morning, flowers are used to decorate a cross.

### **Education 10:00 - 10:40 a.m.**

Covenant will not be holding in-person education through May 3.

### **Announcements**

Covenant will be holding smaller groups on Zoom. We will also hold virtual coffee time each Sunday at 11am on Facebook.

### **Calendar**

Sun. Apr. 12	9:00 a.m.	Worship Online
	10:00 a.m.	Facebook Live Proclamation
	11:00 a.m.	Facebook Live coffee time
Mon. Apr. 13	1:00 p.m.	Book Group, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>
Tue. Apr. 14	4:00 p.m.	Kid's Corner, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>
Wed. Apr. 15	1:00 p.m.	Posted Devotional, <a href="#">View Devotional</a>
Wed. Apr. 15	7:00 p.m.	Covenant Singers, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>
Thur. Apr. 16	10:00 a.m.	Community Group, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>
Thur. Apr. 16	6:00 p.m.	Youth Group, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>
Thur. Apr. 16	8:00 p.m.	Community Group, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>
Fri. Apr. 17	1:00 p.m.	Bible Study, <a href="#">Zoom Meeting</a>

### **Helpful Information**

**Visitor Cards:** If you're a visitor with us, please submit a [Visitors Card](#).

**Celebrations and Concerns:** If you would like to share a celebration or concern with the Covenant community, please submit a [Celebrations and Concerns Form](#).

**Membership:** If you are interested in learning more about Covenant, we encourage you to talk with one of the ministers or the worship leader. Email [Office@covenanthouston.org](mailto:Office@covenanthouston.org).

**Newsletter:** To subscribe to the newsletter, send a request to [office@covenanthouston.org](mailto:office@covenanthouston.org).

**Office Hours:** The church office is currently not open, but we are responding to emails and phone calls.

*Covenant Church affirms the sanctity, dignity, and equality  
of human beings and the value of all life in the universe.  
We welcome persons of all racial and ethnic heritages, all sexual orientations,  
all gender identities, and all faith perspectives to our Christian community.  
We stand for each individual's right to worship God and to respond  
to God's call to ministry in her or his own understanding  
of God's all-encompassing love.  
We value a holistic approach to faith and seek to worship in ways that are  
intellectually credible, emotionally stimulating, spiritually engaging  
and contemporarily relevant.  
We value music and art and ritual to express what we cannot ever fully say.  
We value participation so that we might hear many approaches  
to our shared faith.*

***Covenant Church, an ecumenical, liberal, Baptist congregation***

*Members of Covenant, Ministers*

*Laura Mayo, Senior Minister*

*Jodi Bash, Director of Children & Youth*

*Director of Communication*

*Fran Avera, Minister of Music, Emerita*

*David Lee, Interim Director of Music*

*Patrick Parker, Organist*

*Monique Cruz, Office and Financial Administrator*

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*Pursuant to Section 30.06, Penal Code (trespass by license holder with a concealed handgun), a person licensed under Subchapter H, Chapter 411, Government Code (handgun licensing law), may not enter this property with a concealed handgun.*

*Pursuant to Section 30.07, Penal Code (trespass by license holder with an openly carried handgun), a person licensed under Subchapter H, Chapter 411, Government Code (handgun licensing law), may not enter this property with a handgun that is carried openly.*