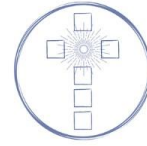




**RESURRECTION STORIES:
Unlock Yours**
The Season of Easter



Serve & Enrich
Zion United Church
of Christ

The 2nd Sunday of Easter: Freed

Prelude

O Wondrous Day

Gathering—We may be imprisoned by many things. Jesus’ declaration that he had come to “set the prisoner free” can be interpreted for all of us, whether or not we’ve ever experienced being behind literal prison bars. This day, we will hear Resurrection Stories that move from chains to freedom. We will reflect on how we can each step into freedom from whatever binds us.

Easter Centering Song: “Because He Lives,” 447
**God sent his Son, they called him Jesus;
he came to love, heal, and forgive;
he lived and died to buy my pardon,
an empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives.**

**Because he lives I can face tomorrow;
because he lives, all fear is gone;
because I know he holds the future,
and life is worth the living just because he lives.**

Prayer—Holy One, we gather with grateful hearts to remember the blessings of your light and love as they flow through our lives each day. In this moment, open our hearts to your Holy Spirit. Open our minds to the truths of your story. Open our hands to welcome the risen Christ among us. And open our eyes to your glory— a glory reflected in the faces around us. In the name of the risen Christ, we pray.

The Lord's Prayer (unison)—Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Choir

Alleluia! Christ Is Risen

Exploring God's Word for All Ages

Story of Resurrection

Question: What does freedom in Christ mean to you?

Story of Resurrection based on Luke 24:13-32

Leader: They were on the road to Emmaus...

Reader: We travel so many roads, so many journeys in this life, sometimes traveling towards, sometimes away from, a life of freedom.

Leader: Jesus came and fell into step with them, but they did not recognize him...

Reader: We are sometimes so overwhelmed with the struggles of this world that we can't see the Companion that walks alongside us.

Leader: Jesus asked them what they were talking about...

Reader: We have recited our stories of pain so often that we can't imagine there are other ways to interpret events, to get past the regret.

Leader: They explained the horror of the recent past, about their friend who was crucified and their disappointment at dreams of liberation dashed...

Reader: We so often think we've hit the end of the road, the finale of the story, with nothing left to say.

Leader: Then Jesus began to tell the story as a bigger picture...

Reader: We sometimes perceive only the parts that feel insurmountable without zooming out to notice the larger narrative of hope.

Leader: They invited Jesus to dinner after such a long walk...

Reader: We actually know how to reach for help, even when we don't realize we need it.

Leader: Jesus took the bread, blessed, broke and gave it to them...

Reader: We are capable of having our eyes opened to the presence of Love in our midst.

Leader: Jesus vanished from the room as quickly as he had appeared on the road

but they were left with the awe and wonder of having their hearts transformed...

Reader: We open to the possibility that nothing is closed, that our hearts can be opened anytime, anywhere, and resurrection from death-dealing forces is possible.

Leader: This is a Word of Hope for the people who long for it.

****Hymn**

When Morning Gilds the Skies, 111

We Hear God's Word—Acts 16:16-34 (NRSV)

Collin Bennington

16 One day, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. ¹⁷While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, 'These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation.' ¹⁸She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And it came out that very hour.

19 But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market-place before the authorities. ²⁰When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, 'These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews ²¹and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe.' ²²The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. ²³After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. ²⁴Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. ²⁷When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul shouted in a loud voice, 'Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.' ²⁹The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰Then he brought them outside and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' ³¹They answered, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' ³²They

spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. ³⁴He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

Meditation

Freed

We Gather at the Table

Hymn

As We Gather At Your Table, 695

Set Your Place at the Table—Whatever you have on hand to celebrate communion will work just fine, because this ancient ritual is not about what we use for this meal or where we partake of it. Instead, it is about the act of remembrance. So, gather around the table, prepare your place, and remember that Christ is in our midst.

Our Invitation—At Christ’s table, we can find freedom from that which burdens us, our brokenness can be made whole, and our lives restore. Come and meet the Resurrected Christ here at the table.

A Prayer for Transformation—God of grace and mercy, we want to continue singing the alleluias of Easter, but there are days we just don’t feel like singing. Sometimes we lock ourselves away, fearful of what has happened or what the day may bring. Sometimes we allow our doubts to overwhelm our faith. Sometimes we forget about the needs of our neighbors because we are so focused on ourselves. Forgive us. Draw us back to you and to one another. Help us walk in your love and light, that others may see in us the loving presence of the risen Christ. Amen.~

Assurance of Grace—Brothers and sisters, siblings in Christ, Jesus promises: “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them.” Receive the hope and promise of this good news, for forgiveness is ours when we forgive one another. Thanks be to God!~

The Words of Institution— On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in

remembrance of me.” When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” And so, we remember...we offer ourselves...we proclaim God’s love...

Blessing Our Meal— Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us a resurrection story in Christ, so that we may be a resurrection story for the world as the Body of Christ, breaking ourselves open to God’s redeemed future. Amen.

We Share the Bread and the Cup—Take now and eat, this is the body of Christ broken for you. Take now and drink, this is the cup of the renewed covenant, Christ’s blood given for you.

We Give Thanks—Almighty God, we give you thanks for the gift of our Savior’s presence in the simplicity and splendor of this holy meal. Unite us with all who are fed by Christ’s body and blood that we may faithfully proclaim the good news of your love and that your universal church may be a rainbow of hope in an uncertain world; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

We Respond to God's Word with Our Giving

Invitation—Through the sharing of our gifts and talents we live out the resurrection hope we know in Christ. With thanksgiving and joy, let us bring our gifts to God.

Opportunities to Live Resurrected

- Package Crayons for Riley Hospital for Children
- Blood Drive – donate, volunteer, spread the word
- Grief Group – support one another in intentional community

April Benevolence—God’s Bounty

****Offering Song:** “I Love to Tell the Story” (pew card)

**The Savior of our stories
has brought his peace to you;
now go and tell the story,**

**for others need it too.
To ev'ry one who's hurting
ring out the gospel call;
proclaim that Christ is risen
and grants his peace to all.**

**I love to tell the story;
'twill be my theme in glory
to tell the old, old story
of Jesus and his love.**

We Give Thanks— Abundant God, we are grateful for all your blessings, especially for the presence of the risen Christ. Bless these gifts, that they may help bring your love and light into our community and our world. Amen.~

Hymn

Christ is Alive, 312

Benediction—Whatever binds you, whatever locks you up, whatever keeps you from the freedom for which you were created...can be wiped clean... for we believe our stories can be rewritten each and every day. We know it isn't this easy or quick, but let this be a vision of your life resurrected.

And now, may you go into the world, unlocking freedom in all the ways you discover you can, for yourself, for others, for the world. And may the God who created you to be free, the Christ who showed you what freedom looks like, and the Spirit who is transforming your life even now, be with you now and evermore. Amen.

Postlude

Praise God!