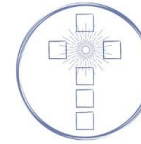




RESURRECTION STORIES:
Unlock Yours
The Season of Easter



Serve & Enrich
**Zion United Church
of Christ**

The 3rd Sunday of Easter: Released

Prelude

Beside Still Waters

Gathering—There are habits and addictions that keep us from experiencing the fullness of life to which God calls us. This week, we consider the variety of ways these habits and addictions occurs in our lives. We will celebrate the Good News that we can refocus our lives onto things that lead us to life and connection to the Holy.

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.
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Prayer—God of resurrection hope, we gather this day to bring you our worship and our praise, to hear your stories of love proclaimed, and to be together as one body in Christ. Release us from those things that bind us, preventing us from living the life you call us to. Through this worship, unlock the doors of our hearts and minds that we might be open to the possibilities you place before us.

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

An Ancient Story of Resurrection

Question: When we find release from those things that hold us back, possibilities unfold before us. What might God be unlocking in your life, in this season? What

do you hope God is unlocking in your life? What are you willing to work alongside God with to unlock in your life?

Story of Resurrection *based on John 20:19-23*

Reader: They trembled in fear behind locked doors as the sun set on that first Easter...

Pastor: We often do not perceive the most transformative possibilities of our lives because we are afraid — of change, of loss, afraid even of healing.

Reader: Jesus broke through the barrier of their hiding place and stood among them...

Pastor: Even when we long for our burdens to be lifted, we become so accustomed to carrying them we cannot imagine being released from them.

Reader: Jesus greeted them with the words: “Peace be with you.”

Pastor: We sometimes find it difficult to embrace peace when our lives are in upheaval, when our hearts grieve, when our world aches.

Reader: Knowing what they needed, Jesus extended his pierced palms and his stabbed side...

Pastor: What evidence do we require to believe our lives can experience resurrection from a power higher than our own? What helps us trust and believe?

Reader: They rejoiced as they recognized their friend, their leader, their Solace and Redeemer...

Pastor: When we search for help and hope, do we rejoice when we see the first possibility of transformation? Do we rejoice along the way to healing?

Reader: Again, Jesus offered his peace and said, as he was sent by God, he now sends them...

Pastor: Even in the midst of our own turmoil, can we find the courage to go where we are sent for healing for ourselves and to go where others are in need of our witness?

Reader: Jesus breathed on them and said: “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Pastor: The gift of Holy Spirit power is always with us and within us to lead and guide and sometimes cajole and awaken us to all the possibilities for renewed life.

Reader: Jesus assured them: Forgive the sins of anyone, and they are forgiven, retain the sins of any and they are retained.

Pastor: We see in the example of Christ how to forgive others and how to release our own woundedness. We open ourselves to the freedom, release, and peace that comes through forgiveness. We forgive ourselves and we forgive others.

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

Pastor: Thanks be to the Living Word.

****Hymn**

Lord, I Lift Your Name on High, 88 (2x)

We Hear God's Word—*Nehemiah 9:9-15 (NRSV)*

Collin Bennington

9 'And you saw the distress of our ancestors in Egypt and heard their cry at the Red Sea. ¹⁰You performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants and all the people of his land, for you knew that they acted insolently against our ancestors. You made a name for yourself, which remains to this day. ¹¹And you divided the sea before them, so that they passed through the sea on dry land, but you threw their pursuers into the depths, like a stone into mighty waters. ¹²Moreover, you led them by day with a pillar of cloud, and by night with a pillar of fire, to give them light on the way in which they should go. ¹³You came down also upon Mount Sinai, and spoke with them from heaven, and gave them right ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments, ¹⁴and you made known your holy sabbath to them and gave them commandments and statutes and a law through your servant Moses. ¹⁵For their hunger you gave them bread from heaven, and for their thirst you brought water for them out of the rock, and you told them to go in to possess the land that you swore to give them.

Meditation

Released

Hymn

Amazing Grace, 422

We Respond to God's Word with Our Giving

Invitation—By sharing generously in this ministry that Christ has called us to, we are able to proclaim through this work the hope and promise we know in the Resurrected Christ. Let us bring to God our gifts and our very lives.

Opportunities to Live Resurrected

- Package Crayons for Riley Hospital for Children
- Blood Drive – donate, volunteer, spread the word

April Benevolence—God’s Bounty and the Meijer Simply Give Program

****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—God, through these gifts may your resurrection story be proclaimed. Work through them and our ministry at Zion United Church of Christ that others might come to know the Good News of your love. Amen.

Hymn

Christ Arose, 294

Benediction—Whatever binds you, whatever locks you up and makes you feel powerless, whatever gets in the way of you living life with vitality, integrity, and joy, 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, finding release in all the ways you discover you can, for yourself, for others, for the world. And may the God who created you as an unbound soul, the Christ who showed you what letting go looks like, and the Spirit who is transforming your life even now, be with you now and evermore. Amen.

Postlude

Postlude Allegretto