



Every part of worship has a video, so we've gathered them [together in a play list](#). If you click on "Play All", they'll play from the beginning of the service to the end! And you can just follow along, never clicking on another link. Or you can go through clicking on all the individual links – your choice.

Prelude: [The Feast by City Hymns](#)

[A vocal piece with lyrics to help you get settled for worship]

Centering Ourselves for Worship:¹

[Join Howard Clements and Cindy Perkins, [in our centering prayer](#).]

Minister: Easter begins in despair.
Our life, our love, our hope forever dead,
crushed by a boulder, bottled up in a cave.

All: Who will roll away the stone?

Minister: Easter takes us by surprise, early in the morning.
The obstacles we expect to face are removed.
Where once death and despair laid
locked in time
now the bright light of hope sprouts wings
to fly from emptiness.
It is, at first, too good to be true.

¹ Today's Centering Prayer was inspired by John W. Howell's "Call to Worship, Easter Morning" in *Touch Holiness*, edited by Ruth C. Duck and Maren Tirabassi, (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990), 75-76.

All: Where have you laid him?

Leader: When faced with a miracle,
Our first reflex is to run.

Minister: Be not afraid.
Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified.
He is risen; he is not here;
see the place where they laid him.
But go your way.
Tell his disciples and Peter
that he goes before you into Galilee.
There you shall see him.

Leader: Suddenly the realization dawns. It may rise as quietly as the sun
creeping over the horizon, or it may explode like fireworks, painting
the world with dazzle. We recognize the One who was dead as he
comes to life in us.

Minister: Christ is risen, Christ is risen indeed!

All: Alleluia!

Leader: And all who encounter the Risen One
whether gently roused by the sunrise
or surprised by the sudden burst of joy
will join the Resurrection Procession

Minister: one by one, slipping into step,
some of us singing,
some of us silently soaking it in,
and all of us feeling like dancing.

All: Alleluia! Christ is risen, Christ is risen, indeed!

Hymn: *This is Our God*

[\[Click here\]](#) for a video that will give you someone to sing with.

If you have a favorite hymn you'd like to include in our worship service, just send
it along and I'll look for a good place for it.]

Pastoral Prayer:²

[Rev. Cath [offering an Easter prayer.](#)]

We thank you, Redeeming God,
for the glorious message
that you bring new hope out of despair,
resurrection out of defeat,
and new life out of death.

² Today's Pastoral Prayer was inspired by Ruth C. Duck's "A Pastoral Prayer for Eastertide" in *Touch Holiness*, edited by Ruth C. Duck and Maren Tirabassi, (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990), 91-92.

You give living water so that new life blossoms.
You urge flower to push their way through winter-hardened soil.
We bring before you the dead and dried-out places in our lives,
that through your touch we may discover newness of life.
We bring before you
the places in our lives and in our world
where despair reigns unchallenged.

Point us toward actions, however small,
which lead to a more hopeful future
for ourselves and our world.

Gracious God,
we thank you that you walk beside us as we journey through life.
Because you are with us,
we accept each new day, with its joys and concerns,
as a gift.
Because you are with us,
we gain courage to meet the challenge of the day,
choosing life and not death as we move through time.

As you raised Jesus from the dead,
raise us to new life day by day.
For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[\[The Lord's Prayer\]](#)

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

[For next week, please feel free to send me your joys & concerns and I'll include them in our prayers: minister@bccnh.org or call/text (978) 494-6953.]

Hymn: *Now the Feast* by Marty Haugen

[\[Click here\]](#) for a video that will give you the lyrics and someone to sing with.]

Scripture Reading: John 20:1-18

[John 20:1-18 [read for you](#)]

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went

towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Scripture Reading: Mark 16:1-8

[Mark 16:1-8 [read for you](#)]

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. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 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. 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.' So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Reflection on the Scripture:

[\[The video of the reflection.\]](#)

Honestly, after this last year, six weeks of Lent feels like nothing. Give up chocolate for Lent? How about giving up hugs? Or play dates? Or movies? We can all make our lists. I have a friend who told me that once she and her husband were fully vaccinated, they were going to eat out every meal for a month, because she was so sick of her own cooking.

And now that we are standing at the edge of something, the edge of life heading somewhere towards normal, we come to Easter and we hear the reading from John with new ears. Mary is looking for Jesus' body to honor it, to take care of it the way she couldn't on the day he was crucified. She says, "Tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." (John 20:15). And, oh, do we get that. We want to tidy up the mess. Something is wrong and we want to fix it.³ For Mary, and for us, the world has been turned on its ear and we'll do anything to get back to normal. For Mary, and for us, nothing will ever be the same, and no one can ever tidy it up. We just have to go forward into the new world, and be part of the cataclysmic changes that are creating this new future.

Mary's not acting illogically. Dead bodies don't move on their own. Find the body, get on with grieving.⁴ For Mary, her closed, logical world is broken open when Jesus calls her name. The One who was certified as dead (John 19:33) is now greeting her. Something illogical, impossible, and unnatural is taking place.⁵ But God didn't become human as some kind of theological thought experiment. God comes into the world as Jesus for the sake of relationship, for all the exceptional and specific moments of human expression, for everything that being a human in relationship with other humans demands.⁶ If our closed, logical worlds are going to flower after the pandemic, we are going to have to listen for God calling our names. We're going to have to listen for Jesus calling out to us through the relationships that we have with other. And we're relating to these exceptional and specific human beings who have their own logic, their own closed worlds that are flowering as well.

When we look at this Easter story in the light of our long, long year of Pandemic Lent, we wonder how Mary did it. All the other disciples have given up. It was dark and Mary stays. The other disciples come and go and Mary stays. The

³ Clayton J. Schmit, "Easter Day, Homiletical Perspective, John 20:1-18" in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary, Year A, Volume 2*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 375.

⁴ Charles B. Cousar "Easter (A B C): John 20:1-18" in *Texts for Preaching: A Lectionary Commentary Based on the NRSV— Year B*, ed. Charles B. Cousar et al. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 275.

⁵ Cousar, 276.

⁶ Karoline Lewis, *John: Fortress Biblical Preaching Commentary*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 238.

angel speaks to her, and Mary stays. A stranger approaches her in a place where a stranger is going to be bad news, and Mary stays. The stranger speaks to her and something extremely illogical and unnatural happens, and Mary stays. So maybe that is how Mary did it. Mary got to leave her old, closed world because she stayed long enough, waited long enough, to glimpse the Resurrection.⁷ If we are going to catch a glimpse of Resurrection life, we need the stamina, courage, stubbornness, determination, anger, faith, whatever you want to call it, to get through the dark, the confusion, the questions. We're going to need all of that to trust the slow process from seed to stem, stem to flower, flower to fruit.⁸

But here's the thing. After this long, long, long year of Pandemic Lent, we are exhausted, physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, spiritually. All the ways we can be worn down, we are. Mary may be a great model or a great metaphor or whatever. But can we even summon enough resources to stay in this exhausting space?

In non-plague years, the sunrise service and the 10:00am service are completely different. The sunrise service is quieter, more connected with the natural environment. The 10:00am has much higher energy with the band and a lot of folks ready to shout alleluia. So the reflections for the two services have to be different. It's been my habit to use the Easter story from Matthew, Mark or Luke at the sunrise, and John at the 10:00am. I've never put two versions of the Easter story side by side. Because they don't match up. The way all our accounts of this past year of Pandemic Lent don't match up. Funnily enough, in this crazy year, we need two different Easter stories. Because in Mark highlights that the work is being done not by us, but by God.

Mark's Easter story, chapter 16, verses 1 to 8, is the end of his gospel. It ends mid-sentence. If you look in your Bibles when you get home, you'll see there's some more text, but as best we can tell, that was added centuries later, by scribes who *really* did not like that Mark's gospel ended without us seeing Jesus again after the empty tomb. So they added text after verse 8 to "fix" the ending.

Maybe it takes the exhaustion of a pandemic to see what Mark was saying in his Easter story, but it's suddenly so much clearer to me. The women arrive at the tomb in a group. They meet a young man, maybe a young man, maybe an angel. And he tells them, "Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him." (Mark 16:7). For Mark, the Resurrection is the promise that Christ always precedes us into God's future.⁹ However we go into the future, rushing to

⁷ Kimberly Clayton, "The Easter Texts: Getting Hold (or Not) of Easter." *Journal for Preachers* 30, no. 3 (2007): 4.

⁸ Ruth C. Duck's "Unison Prayer: Easter (Acts 10:34-43; John 20:22)" in *Touch Holiness*, edited by Ruth C. Duck and Maren Tirabassi, (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990), 86.

⁹ David Bartlett, "The Easter Texts: Hope, Comfort, Courage." *Journal for Preachers* 29, no. 3 (2006): 7.

meet it, dragging our feet, distracted by so many commitments, exhausted by so many demands, Jesus is ahead of us. There is no part of our life where Jesus is not preparing the way for us. Jesus is the bud that flowers before us on the branch.

The young man tells them that Jesus has gone ahead of them and they said nothing to anyone (Mark 16:8). When God enters our lives, directly or indirectly, perhaps silence is the wholly appropriate response.¹⁰ Because what can we say, as we leave the empty tomb that should absolutely not be empty? What can we say when God enters our lives because we feel that we are not worth God's attention? Anything we say is going to shift the focus from what God has done to what we have done in reaction to what God has done. God's voice and presence resounds in the silence without the static busyness of our chatter.

The way Mark tells the Easter story, the final words remain to be fulfilled. They will not be fulfilled by the disciples, or the women or anyone else. Only God's faithfulness will complete this story.¹¹ In Mark's version of the Easter story, we don't see Jesus again. We don't get to make a possession of him¹², something to hold onto, something to beat people up with, even as a mental image, for those of us who have not seen him. We can't hold on to him, even as an image.

Like so many of us in this pandemic year, Jesus knows the heartbreak of letting go of someone we love, seeing them lowered into the ground, knowing there will not be another touch, knowing that the real anguish is yet to come, when the real letting go happens.¹³ In both Easter stories, we are urged, directly and indirectly, not to hold onto Jesus. If we hold onto him, we're likely to try and keep him where we are. Better to let him hold onto us. Better that we let him take us into the loving presence of God, who is ahead of us, every step of the way.¹⁴ In all our excitement and exhaustion of coming to the end of this year-long Lent of Pandemic, Jesus' Easter promise is that he is going ahead of us, holding on to us, every step of the way. Jesus' Easter promise is flowering in our lives.

Hymn: *Testify by Need to Breathe*

[[Click here](#) for a video that will give you the lyrics and someone to sing with.]

¹⁰ Gail R. O'Day, "Easter Vigil, Homiletical Perspective, Mark 16:1-8" in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary, Year B, Volume 2*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 357.

¹¹ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "Easter Vigil, Exegetical Perspective, Mark 16:1-8" in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary, Year B, Volume 2*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 357.

¹² Philip Ruge-Jones, "Alternate Gospel: Commentary on Mark 16:1-8", Working Preacher "Lectionary Commentaries for April 1, 2018, Resurrection of Our Lord", <https://www.workingpreacher.org/?print-all=29433%2C29434%2C29430%2C29431%2C29432> (accessed 3 January 2021)

¹³ Lewis, 242.

¹⁴ Barbara Brown Taylor, "The Unnatural Truth." *The Christian Century* 113, no. 10 (1996): 325.

Flowering of the Cross

[\[Click here\]](#) for the Flowering of the Cross]

The cross stands at the center of our faith as a symbol of life, despite its origins in Jesus' death. There can be no Easter without Good Friday, no Resurrection without the Crucifixion. Indeed, the cross, rather than the empty tomb, has been the primary symbol of the Christian faith.

Some of the earliest depictions of the cross emphasize its life-giving qualities. 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.

So let us decorate this cross. As we add the flowers to the mesh, the cross becomes more visible in the world because we do something together. We physically change the cross so that we are a part of the message that Jesus' death is not the end, that because of that, our lives are not limited by death...

Behold the Resurrection

Hymn: *Redeemed* by Fountain View Academy

[\[Click here\]](#) for a video that will give you someone to sing with.

Prayer of Dedication for the Gifts We've Been Given¹⁵

[\[Let's pray together.\]](#)

Powerful and loving God, you have raised Jesus Christ from the dead. God raise us too. May fresh life burst among us like buds awakening to the spring. May shells of distrust and self-hatred which keep us from loving be broken away so that new life can emerge. May new community spring up where fear has kept us from the stranger.

Keep us patient in making peace and building justice. Teach us to trust the slow process from seed to stem, stem to flower, flower to fruit. Accept the gifts we offer and our lives we live as tools for accomplishing your will in this world. Breathe on us with your Spirit through the risen Christ. Amen.

¹⁵ Today's Prayer of Dedication was inspired by Ruth C. Duck's "Unison Prayer: Easter (Acts 10:34-43; John 20:22)" in *Touch Holiness*, edited by Ruth C. Duck and Maren Tirabassi, (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990), 86.

A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World¹⁶

[[Let's pray together](#). Thanks, Howard and Cindy, for being our Lay Leaders this week!]

Because the tomb is empty, your life can be full, so go into every place and every day as people brimming with the love of God.

Be graceful in spirit, hopeful in word, faithful in deed.

Flower for the risen Christ as Christ flowers in you.

Alleluia and Amen!

[CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE: # 839 "God Be With You Till We Meet Again; by his counsels guide, uphold you, with his sheep securely fold you; God be with you till we meet again."](#)

[The Music Ministry crew made this bit of video for us, so we could all sing together, with each other and our former selves!]

Postlude: [Christ is Risen, He is Risen Indeed](#) by Keith & Kristyn Getty

[Feel free to sing along and let it help you gear up to return to the world.]

Here ends our worship, now let our service begin.

¹⁶ Today's Benediction was inspired by Glen E. Rainsley's "Benediction for Easter" in *Touch Holiness*, edited by Ruth C. Duck and Maren Tirabassi, (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990), 91.

Household Prayer: Morning¹⁷

Heavenly God, our Father, I am full of thanks for a night of rest and for this new day and all that now awaits me. I go forward toward encounters with family and friends, work and play, and all that will bring me into contact with strangers, certain that you are with me. Lead and guide me in the way of a resurrected life. Help me to see the risen Lord today; in Jesus' name. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Holy God, our Mother, you are my comfort at the end as at the beginning of each day. You pull me toward the goodness you desire for me. I give you thanks for all that has come my way this day, and I ask your enveloping power to watch over me this night. Give rest to all your people. Wherever there is pain and struggle, may your holy angels bring peace; in Jesus' name. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

Paul's claim about Christ Jesus in 1 Corinthians 15 is a creed: Christ died, was buried, was raised, and appeared to many disciples and finally to Paul, who writes, "by the grace of God I am what I am" (v. 10). If you were to say those words of yourself, what would it mean that everything about you—all you are and have done—is "by the grace of God"? Where is God's grace evident in your life today?

Daily Awareness Reflection¹⁸

At the end of the day, I've been asking myself the following questions. I jot down the answers and ask them again the next evening. I've found it helps me to remain centered as well as increasing my awareness of God in my life. It takes about 10 minutes.

1. Slow down. Stop. Prepare yourself to pray by becoming aware of the love with which God looks on you ...
2. Note the gifts God has given you today. Give thanks to God for them ...
3. Ask God that this be a time of special grace and revelation ...
4. With God, review the day. Look at the stirrings of your heart, your thoughts, and your choices as the day progressed. Which have been of God? Which have not? What does God want to say to you about both? ...
5. Ask for forgiveness for failures/omissions, for healing from their effects ...
6. Look forward to the following day, and plan concretely with God how to live it according to God's desire for your life ...

¹⁷ The Morning & Evening Prayer and Question for Reflection are reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from *Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion*. Copyright 2014.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Liebert, *The Soul of Discernment* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2015), 31.

Announcements:

Please shop smile.amazon.com and choose Brookline Community Church as your charity to support the church. Thanks!

The church's financial obligations continue. If you are able, please mail your offering to: Brookline Community Church, PO Box 507, Brookline, NH 03033.

	Actual Income	Actual Expenses	Income vs. Expenses +/-
February	\$18,520	\$14,242	\$4,277

All people age 50+ are now in Phase 2b for COVID-19 vaccine distribution.

Phase 2b began scheduling on March 22 at 8:00am. [Use this page to determine in what phase you belong](#) and for further directions.

The March/April edition of *The Upper Room* is available in the mail room, if you're looking for a printed daily Scripture reading and reflection to add to your spiritual practice.

Reflecting on the Past Year as Part of the Hillsborough Assn Mtg on 5/2:

The Hillsborough Association of the NH UCC will hold its annual meeting on May 2nd. They are looking for each church to offer a brief, two-minute reflection on the stories of our church family over the past year. If you are interested in doing this for us, I have a list of prompting questions that you might find useful.

Covid-19 Scams Targeting Seniors

The [NH Attorney General's office put out a press release](#) describing several scams that are targeting seniors. The claims range from needing personal information to get their Social Security payments, to being family members in need of cash to treat Covid-19 symptoms, to offers of fake medical products to prevent Covid-19, to needing personal information to get their stimulus checks, to fake charities. (Honestly, what are people like?!?). Please pass the word.

Covid-19 Information

If people want to know the latest status of Covid-19 in NH and the Emergency orders to date, go to <https://www.nh.gov/covid19/>

Help Lines

This time of isolation can be very difficult. You may know someone who needs some support beyond what you can provide. We're in this together.

- Suicide prevention: 1-800-273-8255
- Sexual assault: 1-800-656-4673
- Domestic violence: 1-800-799-7233

Brookline Food Pantry

Although we cannot be together physically at this time, Outreach is continuing to work with Rebecca Purdin through the Brookline Welfare office & CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) to address our community's needs.

The Brookline food pantry is now open on Tuesdays & Thursdays from 10-2:00 for drop-offs only. There is a list on the [Brookline Food Pantry's Facebook page](#) that is being updated as items are needed. In addition to Market Basket gift cards, this week, they're looking for:

Pickles	Apple or Cranberry Juice
Parmesan	Paper Towels
Cookies/Cookie Mix	Coffee
Cheese Nip (or similar) Crackers	Disposable Razors
Jello/Gelatin (any flavors)	Dry Cat Food
Sardines	Dry Dog Food
Cereal (especially Raisin Bran or "Fun" Cereals)	Dish Soap
	Zip-style Bags

If you know of anyone who could use some help from the Food Pantry, please let Rebecca or Amy know. We sense there's more need in the community than is currently picking up food.

Non-perishables can be dropped off at Brookline Town Hall (downstairs near the Town Clerk's Office), at the Brookline Post Office, or at the Cozy Tae Cart any time those places are open.

As always, perishable items such as bread, cheese, butter, eggs, meats, and milk can be donated during open pantry hours: Tues and Thurs, 10am - 2pm.

Thank you for your continued support to our church and our community.