

SOJOURNERS UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

“A safe place to begin. A safe place to begin again.”

April 11, 2021

In the morning at 10:00am

Second Sunday of EASTER

Peace be With You



“We are a community of faith called and empowered by the Holy Spirit to walk in the way of Jesus, by including all peoples in all walks and ways of life, in our life of worship and celebration, nurture and growth, love and service.”

~ Covenant of Sojourners Congregation

Gathering Music

“We Live by Faith and Not by Sight,”

words by Henry Alford, 1844; Irish traditional melody

We live by faith and not by sight; no gracious words we hear
From Christ who spoke as none e'er spoke, who still, we know, is near.

We may not touch Christ's hands and side, nor follow where Christ trod,
But in confessing we rejoice: our Savior and our God!

Help then, O Christ, our unbelief; and may our faith abound
To call on you when you are near and seek where you are found.

Welcome, Introductions, and Announcements

Call to Worship

Dave Clarke

Liturgist: At the beginning of the day, at the beginning of the week, the faithful yet fearful people gathered together. It was then that the Spirit of God came among them and whispered:

All: *Whispering out loud, but muted*

Peace be with you.

Their hearts skipped a beat as they double checked that the lock on the front door was still latched. So the Presence of God spoke a little louder:

Peace be with you.

They looked around at each other, puzzled, amazed, befuddled, and bewildered. Some smiled. Some doubted. Some wondered if it were just too magical sounding or too good to be true. So the Christ showed them that his own scars were not the end of the story and that is when the words of God began to feel joyous:

All: *Speaking out loud, but muted*

Peace be with you.

From that day on, the people of God repeated the words to one another when they gathered. From one generation to the next, they exchanged the words as a greeting to one another to remember that Holy interruption to fear:

All: *With Worship Panel speaking out loud, unmuted, in expression of joyful community*

Peace be with you!

Invocation

Liturgist: Let us pray:

All: *Out loud, but muted*

Come Dear God, abide with us, for we have discerned in your Holy Word what others refuse to believe. Even now, after more than two thousand years, who among us can clearly define it. Who, except you, can fathom it's height or depth? Who can discern the breadth of it? And, yet, once more, we find ourselves here, anticipating meaningful worship in another post Easter Season. Further bridge the chasm that separates us from you, so we may, at Pentecost, feel again

your breath flowing among us. If only in a “still small voice,” speak to us Holy One, for your servants are listening. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Liturgist: Holy One, our confession won't be news to you, but maybe if we allow it to be spoken aloud, You can help us find a way forward.

All: *Out loud, but muted*

Dear God, we have doubts. We're not talking about doubts like Thomas—his were perfectly reasonable—after all we too long to see You, touch You, and truly know You.

Our doubts feel different. We doubt that the peace you offer is really possible because many nations of the world and the people in our own country are in conflict.

We doubt that new life is possible because the wounds we bear are still overwhelming.

We doubt that You really intended to call us when You called the disciples to be of service in creating a new way of being in the world.

We hear the age-old stories, but we are filled with doubts about ourselves, and if we are honest, doubts about your Holy possibilities. Oh God, in these moments of stillness, hear our doubts and settle our hearts, souls, and minds...

Prayerful Silence:

Assurance of Grace

Liturgist: In the midst of the disciples' doubts and worries, in the midst of their fear, the Spirit of God came among them and whispered, “Peace be with you.” Beloved People of God, hear the holy invitation of grace offered to every generation: Peace be with you. You are God's beloveds not because of what you have done or not done.

All: We are God's beloveds because of who we are, and who we are is a people called and gifted to be a presence of peace and love in this world. Our shortcomings are forgiven. Grace abounds. God calls out to us. Peace be with you. Thanks be to God!

Collections Cart

Dave Clarke

This is the time the children usually collect donations of food for the food bank from the congregation. The Food Bank and other organizations still need your donations, perhaps even more now than previously. It may be easier right now to contribute financially to the [Blue Ridge Area Food Bank](#).

Time with Children

Rev. Patricia Barth

Contemporary Reading

Dave Clarke

Karin Wright *“The North American church is trying to maintain something rather than achieve something.”*

Khalil Gibran : *“Doubt is a pain too lonely to know that faith is his twin brother.”*

Scripture Lesson: John 20:19-31 NRSV

Dave Clarke

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

Jesus and Thomas

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin^[a]), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

The Purpose of This Book

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe^[b] that Jesus is the Messiah,^[c] the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Liturgist: *This is the Word of God, for the People of God!*

All: *(out loud, but muted)*
Thanks be to God.

The Sermon/Message

Pastor Marvin L. Morgan

Pastor: Let us pray.

All: *(out loud, but muted)*

God of heaven and earth. It seems no matter how hard we try to live and to reflect certainty of faith and belief, from one moment to the next, doubt seems always present among us. Like Phillip who said, “Show us the Holy One, and that will satisfy us” and Thomas who would not believe except he touched the body of the risen Jesus, we also yearn for signs that you our God have not forsaken us. Stand close to us Dear God, during these weeks of Easter reflection. Reassure us as we await the day when we may once again celebrate the receiving of your Divine Holy Spirit. Make it for us, like “fire shut up in our bones”, to shake us out

of any lingering doubt and all complacency. Then, may our lives be lived in ways that are pleasing in your sight. This we pray, in your many names. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

Pastor: God invites us to bring the fullness of who we are into worship and to share the fullness of who we are with the world. So it is God's holy invitation that asks us to pause and wonder what we want to offer of ourselves to the world. Will we offer time; presence; kindness; financial support; or prayers?

In these moments of quiet and reflection: what is it that you have to offer this day to bring about God's peace on Earth?

This is our opportunity to give, financially, to the family that nurtures us in new growth. *[We urge you to visit [our webpage](#) and click on the "Donate or Pledge Now" tab, to present your gifts.]*

Dedication Prayer

All: *(out loud, but muted)*

God, bless the gifts that are being given, as we worship, those that will be given, later in the day, and in the days to come. May our gifts be used and shared in ways that further your kin-dom on earth. Amen.

Joys and Concerns

Rev. Karen Mann

It is more important than ever to hold one another in prayer. If you are participating in this service at-home, we invite you to light a candle and remember your fellow Sojourners in prayer. If you are watching live from home, we invite you to leave a comment, on the "Chat" screen, with your joys or concerns, now. Please remember that this is a PUBLIC forum and can be seen by anyone.

Pastoral Prayer by Pastor Morgan

Closing Hymn

"All Must Be Well,"

words by Mary Bowly Peters (1813-1845)

music by Matthew S. Smith, 2010

1. Through the love of God, our Savior, All will be well;
Free and change-less is God's favor, All is well.
Precious is the love that heals us,
Perfect is the grace that seals us,
Strong the hand stretched forth to shield us, All must be well.

2. Though we pass through tribulation, All will be well.
Ours is such a full salvation, All is well.
Happy if in God confiding,
Fruitful if in Christ abiding,
Steadfast through the Spirit's guiding,

All must be well.

3. We expect a bright tomorrow, All will be well;
Faith can sing through days of sorrows, All is well;
On the Creator's love relying,
Jesus ev'ry need supplying,
Yes, in living and in dying, All must be well.

Closing Comments by Pastor Morgan

Benediction Sojourners, Go forth into this day and into the world in the name of God, the one who created you; go in the name of Jesus who shows us the way; and go in the name of the Holy Spirit, who is with us now and always.

Peace be with you.

All: *Whispered out loud, but muted*

And Peace be with you.

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