



Newsletter of the English-speaking United Methodist Congregation in Munich

Easter 2021

*EASTER MEDITATION // CHILDREN'S EASTER ACTIVITY // EASTER PRAYERS & POEMS
NEWS & EASTER SERVICES INFO // ARTICLE: TUESDAY PRAYER MEETING & ONLINE CHOIR*

Dying to be resurrected

An Easter Meditation by Kat Wagner

Bible readings: Matthew 27: 57-61 & Matthew 28: 1-10

Dear Peace Church sisters and brothers,

This year, more than ever, as our lives continue to be impacted by the pandemic, I can feel a connection to the Easter story. During Holy Week and Easter, we mark Jesus' betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion, death and burial, and then we celebrate the wonder of his resurrection. This year, in some ways, Easter is our lived reality: daily suffering; deaths of loved ones; burial of hoped-for plans; but are we yet catching glimpses of hope?

...hope for friendships refreshed with hugs, hope for family reunions, hope for job security, hope for a rest and a holiday, hope for a new kind of life. We have been through a lot, it has been tough. Many people have had their hearts broken. Many have reached the end of their resources. Many are crying out for relief. Many are exhausted from the worry and the uncertainty.

The women and men who followed Jesus through his arrest, and his trial, and his barbaric execution must have been exhausted, distraught and heart-broken too. They reacted in different ways. Some

ran away in fear, others were overcome with grief. Some were pragmatic, others were panicked. For them, there was no sense, no reason, no clarity, only the emptiness of death.

Luke tells us that the women who saw Jesus buried went home and rested on the Sabbath (Luke 23: 55-56). This *time between* Good Friday and Easter Sunday is a threshold moment, a true Sabbath, a time of rest and waiting.

Let us dwell here awhile – with the Easter Saturday mourners. For we cannot celebrate Easter resurrection without first dying and lying in the tomb.

Maybe you would like to try this Easter Saturday contemplative practice:

In Matthew 27: 60-61 we read: *Joseph (...) rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.* ⁶¹*Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.*

Picture yourself, like Mary Magdalene, sitting outside the tomb of the buried Christ:

- ... watch patiently
- ... notice the large stone across the entranceway, but do not try to move it.
- ... in the presence of 'nothing' or even 'death', fill the tragic gap with the pure presence of God.
- ... wait without answers.
- ... hope without evidence.
- ... accept your 'not knowing'.
- ... hold the space, without resolution or consolation.

Stay in this posture of prayer (on this threshold) until resurrection comes; until your anger, fear or hopelessness is released and you let it die.

During his ministry, Jesus said, "A single grain of wheat must fall to the ground and die, in order for it to yield a plentiful harvest" (John 12: 24).

This is the pattern of life that Jesus taught and demonstrated. We cannot shortcut to a heavenly state. There is a gate that we must pass through (the road is narrow!). But love is stronger than death! Maybe we have to die a thousand small deaths in our daily lives for us to believe this.

One example of this pattern is the water cycle. Think back to your geography lessons, and observe the journey taken by the water. As you read, you may want to imagine how this journey translates into your own life:

A droplet of rain falls (from a cloud), smashes into the ground, sinks, and is absorbed into its new world. It has joined the other fallen raindrops as groundwater, usually unseen and unnoticed, eventually making its way into a river: a channel flowing into something greater – the sea. And on a hot sunny day, that droplet (no longer separable from its companions) evaporates from the surface of the ocean through the air and transforms once again into cloud form.

The rain drop is changed in its nature by Nature itself. Form is *transformed*. Life is resurrected by Life itself. Resurrection is our universal pattern of life. Resurrection is our gift (we can only receive it) and our hope.

For me, Easter is a sign that death never has the last word. The crucifixion is a sign that God knows and shares our pain and suffering. For me, the

occupied-and-then-empty tomb is a sign that we must die in order to be released from death. The resurrection is a sign that we live forever with God. Jesus' bodily resurrection is a sign that our bodies matter.

Even though our current day-to-day situation may still feel like Easter Saturday, with Christ's body waiting inside the closed tomb, let us be those people who hold onto hope for a new day. For resurrection!

"Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" (Psalm 30: 5b).

Let us anticipate what it will be like to walk out from the darkness of the tomb (and the constraints of Corona restrictions) into a new way of life. How do we want to live? What have we learned 'inside the tomb'? How do we live as Resurrection People?

Now is a time to give thanks for all we have, and to celebrate: Easter is here! The long night of sadness is over. The tomb is empty. Christ has been raised from the dead! Love lives!

Happy Easter!

Kat x

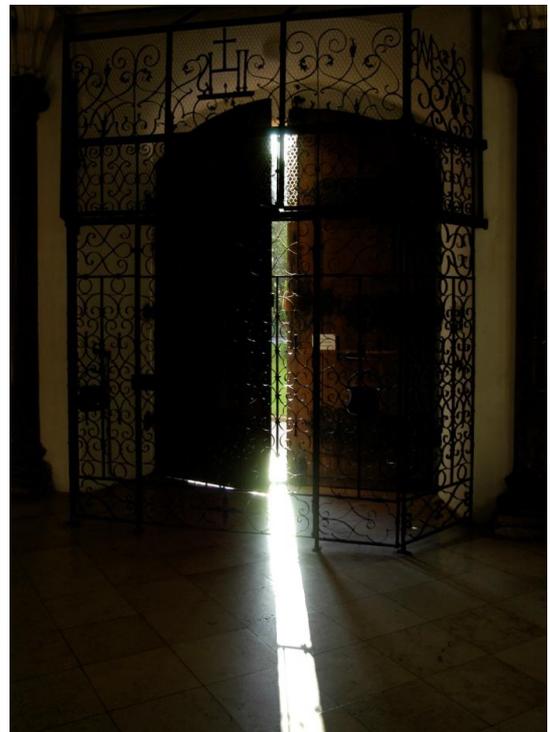


Image: Bright light floods in with laser precision. At first, we are startled. Dare we let our 'small selves' be exposed and die, to be resurrected and live at one with Love?

Easter Prayers and Poems

Thus it was

by Dag Hammarskjöld

I am being driven forward
Into an unknown land.
The pass grows steeper,
The air colder and sharper.
A wind from my unknown goal
Stirs the strings
Of expectation.

Still the question:
Shall I ever get there?
There where life resounds,
A clear pure note
In the silence.

Easter Prayer of Thanksgiving

Easter God,
we bring you our praise and our thanks.

You take the pain of our Good Fridays,
the watching of suffering and the waiting for death,
and transform our helplessness
into fragile beginnings of hope.

You take the bleakness of our Easter Saturdays,
the weariness of defeat and desolation,
and transform our despair
into the will and courage to go on.

You take the grieving of Easter Sunday morning,
the fearful approach to the tomb,
and transform our bewilderment
into the breathless excitement of new life.

And so, with Mary and the disciples,
with all who have wept and been comforted,
with all who have mourned and found hope,
we sing your Easter praises:

Alleluia!



Jesus Christ, we greet you!

Jesus Christ, we greet you!
Your hands still have holes in them,
your feet are wet from the dew;
and with the memory of our names
undimmed by three days of death
you meet us,
risen from the grave.

We fail to understand how;
we puzzle at the reason why.

But you have come:
not to answer our questions,
but to show us your face.

Amen

Christ is risen; He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

from David Coleman



Risen in quiet and mysterious darkness
before the chorus of the dawn.

Alleluia, Christ is risen;
HE IS RISEN INDEED:

Risen with glory and grace in reserve,
and authority beyond measure.

Alleluia, Christ is risen;
HE IS RISEN INDEED:

Risen to prove that violence is no solution;
to offer us peace and life in all its fullness.

Alleluia, Christ is risen;
HE IS RISEN INDEED.

Risen One,
stand among us
speak your words of peace
release us from our fears
heal us from our wounds.

**Forgive our betrayals,
our denials of your love,
that we may participate in your just living.**

Holy dancer,
you soar from the grave
with cosmic rhythm,
wiping earth's tears
in the heralding dawn.

**Hold our hands
in the dance of justice
weave our steps into spirals of freedom.**

The first gold of dawn

by Jean Murdoch

The long day
stretched into night
and time crept forward
towards the new day.

With the first gold of dawn
came a resurrection,
a new hope that grew
with the rising sun,
and went out into the waiting world.



i thank You God for most this amazing

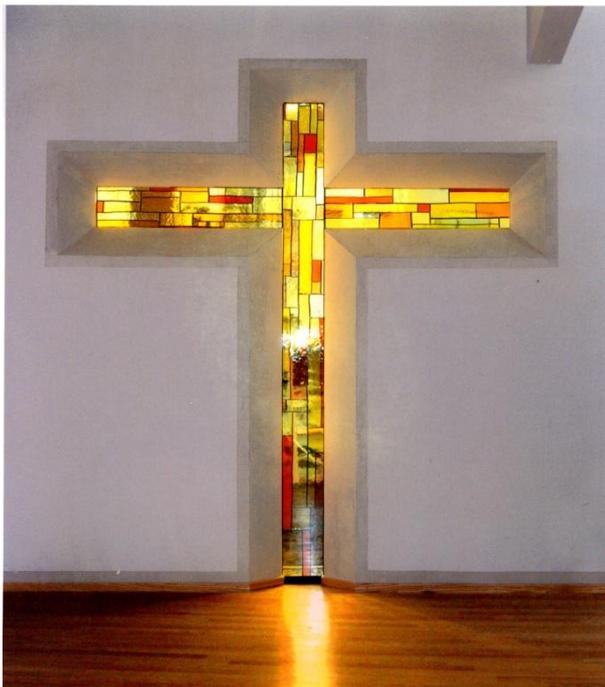
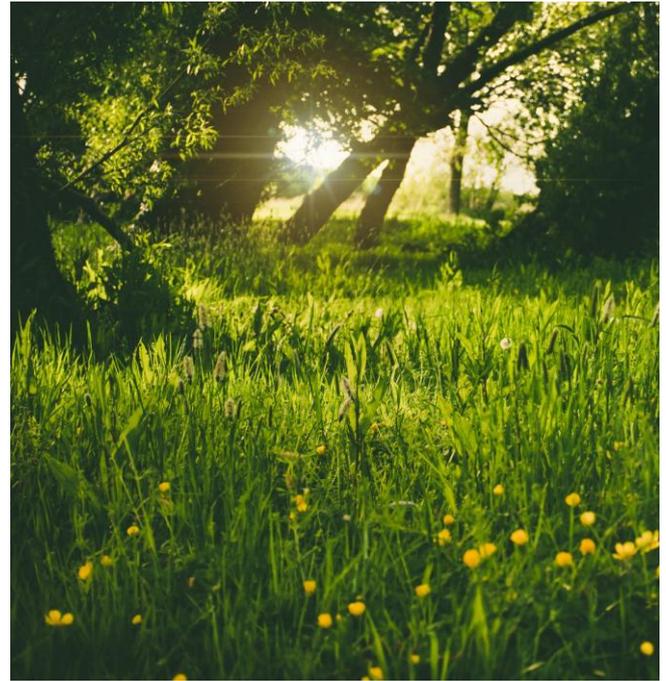
by e.e.cummings

i thank You God for most this amazing
day:for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky;and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday;this is the birth
day of life and of love and wings:and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any—lifted from the no
of all nothing—human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)



RESTORE AND HEAL
ALL THAT IS WOUNDED

BE PRESENT
IN THE STILLNESS OF THE WAITING

ROLL BACK THE STONE
OF PREJUDICE AND FEAR

RELEASE THE SIGNS
OF SPRING.

Risen Empowerment

by Diarmuid Ó Murchú (Stanzas 1, 2 & 5)

What happened to Jesus on the first Easter Day
Is a myst'ry beyond comprehension.
The lure of another dimension.
A boundary-breaker we cannot contain,
A creative disruption we cannot explain.
The heart that is silent, mid echoes endure
Must live with a mystery both subtle and pure.
Empowering a new transformation.

What happened the women on the first Easter Day
Breaks open a daring horizon,
Inviting all hearts to discern.
Mid the grieving and trauma of loss,
The horror to stand at the foot of a Cross.
A body we think was buried in haste,
And a tomb that was empty but restless in taste.
Empowering a strange group of women.

What happened to those on the first Day of Easter,
The faithful disciples by Magdalene led?
A subverted truth the patriarchs dread.
Beyond all the theories that time has construed,
Beyond the oppression we have too long endured.
The first ones commissioned for Easter proclaim
A woman-led mission we've brutally maimed.
But we can't keep subverting empowerment.

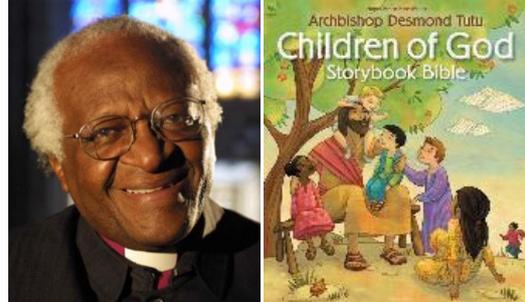
Easter Activities for Children and Families

from Pastor Christine Erb-Kanzleiter

Story Time

Invite your children to sit with you round a table or somewhere in the living room.

Read the following story from Desmond Tutu's Children's Bible with them. If your kids can read, they maybe want to share in the reading.



God raises Jesus from the dead

Two days after Jesus died, Mary and several other women went to the tomb where he had been buried. They were shocked to see that the stone that had covered the opening had been rolled away. They looked inside. Jesus' body was gone!

Two angels in dazzling clothes said: "Why are you looking for Jesus here? Jesus is alive! Go and tell the others."

The women rushed to tell the disciples. At first, no one believed them.

A little while later, the disciples gathered to talk about what had happened. Suddenly, Jesus stood right in front of them.

"Peace be with you," Jesus said.

The disciples were so frightened they clutched each other and trembled. But Jesus said: "Don't be afraid, it's me. Look at my hands and my feet. Touch me."

But they still could not believe that Jesus was alive.

"Give me a piece of fish," Jesus said. He took the fish and ate it. And his friends were convinced.

Jesus really was alive and back with them again. They were so happy, they laughed and clapped their hands in joy.

Let your children clap their hands.

Ask the children what they liked most in the story.

Let them ask their questions.

Try to give answers, but let the children learn that not every question must find an answer.

Let them discover that there is a mystery in so many things, and especially in the Christian Easter story.

Activity: Easter Gardens

The transformation of the deep sadness after Jesus' death into the joy of the Easter Day is often symbolised by the creation of an Easter garden.

Nobody really understands what happened on Easter morning. Nobody can tell exactly how the resurrection came about. Nobody knows how it worked that people could see Jesus, that they knew he was alive and still with them.

And because people did not understand fully, they needed other ways to express "life". A garden is a great symbol to express life, hope and a new beginning. A garden expresses joy with all its colours and its beauty.



Invite the children to make a little Easter garden. If you can, take them out for a walk and collect things which you can use for the Easter Garden.

You will need: plates, stones, a little piece of white cloth, grass, maybe moss, angels, women, crosses, little flowerpots, tiny spring flowers such as snowbells, primroses, crocuses.

If you can't go outside or don't find enough things in nature you can use paper plates and photos, paper and cardboard and make a collage of a garden. Or you take crayons and coloured pencils and let the children make a painting of a beautiful garden.



If you like, use the prayer Desmond Tutu adds to the story:

Dear God, help me to see that Jesus lives.

Peace Church News

Easter Services

This Easter we plan to hold the following in-person services:

Good Friday (2 April) 12 noon
Stations of the Cross

Easter Sunday (4 April) 12 noon
All-age Easter Worship with Communion

Easter Sunday (4 April) 6pm
Evening Prayer



HOPING TO RE-OPEN AFTER THE EASTER HOLIDAYS

If the restrictions allow it we are planning to re-open Homework Club for secondary school kids and teenagers on

Friday | 16th April

As usual, there will be lunch at **14:00/2PM** for everyone

Nico will get in touch with the group when the date comes closer

Tuesday Prayer Meeting and Online Choir

By Cathy Williams

LOCKDOWN! Little Social Contact! No School! Home Office! - I could go on! Sometimes it's difficult to remain positive but it's important that we do.

However one big positive at the moment is the Tuesday evening online prayer group. It successfully metamorphosed from an in-church meeting to an open and friendly online gathering.



We take turns to lead the 6pm meetings with the central meditation usually the same as the one from the Sunday evening service. Wonderful reflections from many of our young lay preachers are sometimes heard on audio file and sometimes read.

Prayer requests from the Prayer Wall in church then form the basis of the prayer element of our meetings. We also listen to some music or songs and afterwards we have a time of fellowship to share news and chat.

Different people come to join us at different times and everyone is very welcome to contact Vanda for the Zoom code!

A new project for us all is taking part in an online choir. Vanda's enthusiasm has been infectious and we now all have parts to practise for the anthem, *Lamb of God* by Twila Paris.

With lots of help and guidance we are all attempting to individually record our parts before they are centrally collected and hopefully all put together.

It is something that I think few of us had thought of doing but it's a really good opportunity to have a try. Listen out for the release around Easter!

Impressum

Your suggestions, comments and contributions to the Newsletter are welcome. Deadline for the next issue is 14 May. If you would like to receive future issues by e-mail, please send a message to christine@peacechurch.de, simply type "PCN by mail" and we will add your address to the list.

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