



## Johnsville United Methodist Church

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### Union Bridge, MD

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Our mission is to nurture the members of the congregation in developing a personal relationship with God and to share His word and His love with the larger community.

PRAISE, WORSHIP AND CELEBRATION  
Easter Sunday – April 4, 2021

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#### PRELUDE

"The Strife is O'er, the Battle Done" (Palestrina)

#### WELCOME

#### Opening Hymn

"Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"

UMH 302

1. Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!  
Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia!  
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!  
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!

2. Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!  
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!  
Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!  
Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!

3. Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!  
Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!  
Once he died our souls to save, Alleluia!  
Where's thy victory, boasting grave? Alleluia!

4. Sour we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!  
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!  
Made like him, like him we rise, Alleluia!  
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

5. Hail the Lord of earth and heaven, Alleluia!  
Praise to thee by both be given, Alleluia!  
Thee we greet triumphant now, Alleluia!  
Hail the Resurrection, thou, Alleluia!

6. King of glory, soul of bliss, Alleluia!  
Everlasting life is this, Alleluia!  
Thee to know, thy power to prove, Alleluia!  
Thus to sing, and thus to love, Alleluia!

Call to Worship: (Psalm 118, Mark 16)

Leader: Give thanks to the Lord!

**People: God's love endures forever!**

Leader: Sing songs of victory! Shout the good news!

**People: Jesus is risen! Christ is risen!**

Leader: Open the gates of righteousness!

**People: Enter in and give thanks to the Lord!**

Leader: This is the day the Lord has made!

**People: Hallelujah! Rejoice! Christ is risen!**

Opening Prayer: (Psalm 118)

Pastor: We can hardly believe our eyes and ears—the Lord is risen! Let us pray.

**People: Mighty God, you have become our strength and our salvation. With Christ, you have raised us from the dead. With Christ, you have freed us from the chains of death. The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone of our lives. We marvel at your amazing love, Lord. We are delirious with joy! Hear the praises of your people on this day of days! Amen.**

#### PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

God of power and majesty:

With the rising of the sun you have raised Jesus Christ and delivered Him and us from death's destruction. We praise you on this bright day for all your gifts of new life.

Especially we thank you

for all victories over sin and evil in our lives . . .

for loyalty and love of friends and family . . .

for the newborn, the newly baptized,

and those now in your eternal home . . .

for the renewal of nature . . .

for the continuing witness of the church of Christ . . .

God of eternity:

You are present with us because of Christ's rising from the dead,

and you persist in lifting us to new life in Him.

We bring to you our prayers for this world in need of resurrection.

Especially we pray

for nations and peoples in strife . . .

for the poor and impoverished, at home and abroad . . .

for those we know in particular circumstances of distress . . .

for healing, cures, and arrest of the COVID-19 pandemic . . .

for the diseased and the dying . . .

for all who follow the risen Christ . . .

Who taught us to pray be saying...

#### 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.

1. I serve a risen Savior,  
he's in the world today;  
I know that he is living,  
whatever foes may say.  
I see his hand of mercy,  
I hear his voice of cheer,  
and just the time I need him,  
he's always near.

2. In all the world around me  
I see his loving care,  
and though my heart grows weary,  
I never will despair.  
I know that he is leading  
through all the stormy blast;  
the day of his appearing  
will come at last.

*Refrain*

*Refrain*

He lives, (he lives), he lives, (he lives)  
Christ Jesus lives today!  
He walks with me and talks with me  
along life's narrow way.  
He lives, (he lives), he lives, (he lives)  
Salvation to impart!  
You ask me how I know he lives?  
He lives within my heart.

3. Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian,  
lift up your voice and sing  
eternal hallelujahs  
To Jesus Christ the King!  
The hope of all who seek him,  
the help of all who find;  
none other is so loving,  
So good and kind.

*Refrain*

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

### Hebrew Scripture Lesson: Psalm 118:14-29

The LORD is my strength and my might;  
he has become my salvation.

<sup>15</sup> There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:

"The right hand of the LORD does valiantly;

<sup>16</sup> the right hand of the LORD is exalted;  
the right hand of the LORD does valiantly."

<sup>17</sup> I shall not die, but I shall live,  
and recount the deeds of the LORD.

<sup>18</sup> The LORD has punished me severely,  
but he did not give me over to death.

<sup>19</sup> Open to me the gates of righteousness,  
that I may enter through them  
and give thanks to the LORD.

<sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the LORD;  
the righteous shall enter through it.

<sup>21</sup> I thank you that you have answered me  
and have become my salvation.

<sup>22</sup> The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the chief cornerstone.

<sup>23</sup> This is the LORD's doing;  
it is marvelous in our eyes.

<sup>24</sup> This is the day that the LORD has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Save us, we beseech you, O LORD!  
O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!  
<sup>26</sup> Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD.<sup>[b]</sup>  
We bless you from the house of the LORD.  
<sup>27</sup> The LORD is God,  
and he has given us light.  
Bind the festal procession with branches,  
up to the horns of the altar.<sup>[c]</sup>  
<sup>28</sup> You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;  
you are my God, I will extol you.  
<sup>29</sup> O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.

#### Epistle Lesson: Acts 10:34-43

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem.

They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear,

not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead.

All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

#### Gospel Lesson: Mark 16:1-8

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.

<sup>2</sup> And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.

<sup>3</sup> They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?"

<sup>4</sup> When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back.

<sup>5</sup> As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

<sup>6</sup>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.

<sup>7</sup>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.”

<sup>8</sup>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.

Response to Scriptures:

Leader: This is the word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God!**

Sermon:                    “He is Risen! We Have Been Set Free!”                    Rev. Shari McCourt

It was early that morning, that morning of the first day of the week, when the women gathered. We can imagine that they were still having nightmares of the crucifixion of their friend, and teacher, Jesus. They were there when He was handed over to his own people who shouted, “Crucify Him!” The women watched him walk through the streets wearing a crown of thorns with blood dripping down his head, while people mocked him, and spat upon him. As He was lead through the city up to a place a called Golgotha, which means “Skull,” they were not far from Him. They were there when they nailed Him to the cross, and hung Him high on a symbol of suffering and shame. The women sat on the hillside as Jesus took His last breath. Their love poured out through tears as they comforted one another. We can only imagine the pain that the women must have felt for Him.

In Mark 15:42-47, we can read the next part of the story. Joseph of Arimathea a respected member of the council. He came to Pilate, and asked for Jesus’ body. This act of respect shone for Jesus, was unusual for anyone, **except** the son of God.

The Roman officer in charge of Jesus the prisoner, came to believe in Him. Levi the tax collector, a hated profession, became a disciple. The gospel of Mark makes it clear that Jesus touched the lives of the most unlikely people that included one, and all.

Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in freshly purchased linen, and laid Jesus body in a newly formed grave, or tomb. A heavy, large stone was rolled to close Jesus burial place. The women watched all that Joseph had done, so they knew where Jesus was buried.

Early on the morning of the first day of the week, three days after he was crucified, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices to anoint Jesus body to give him a proper burial. As the women walked on foot, they talked with one another regarding who they might ask to roll back the heavy stone. We might only imagine the looks on their faces when they saw that the stone had already been rolled back. It was their duty out of love to prepare the body. Maybe they rushed into the tomb to see what had happened, or maybe they moved slowly out of fear of what they might find.

When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, an angel, dressed in a white robe on the right side of where the body had laid. Mark said, “...they were alarmed.” The oldest of the gospel

texts tells a straight forward account of what was seen. Mark 16:6-8 said, “<sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>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.” <sup>8</sup>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.” I am always amazed at how the angel is so calm, and matter-of-fact about where Jesus was. It is obvious that this was the plan.

The women may have overheard Jesus explaining to the disciples in many ways, what was going to happen, but they probably over heard from the kitchen, others may have been sitting at Jesus feet, but it would still be difficult to believe. They saw him suffer and die. His body was laid in the tomb. The women like many of us, can hear good news, and doubt it for a moment, when we see it. When we are faced with hope, square in the face of hope, many of us are also afraid and amazed. The angel told them that Jesus had gone ahead of them. Jesus had shared that he is the life and the way. The women were instructed to share the good news with the other disciples and Peter. Jesus had kept his word and was in Galilee where he said that he would be. The women were shocked and left the tomb in silence.

In an article in Sojourners magazine, (Vol. 50, No. 4, April 2021, page 48), Isaac S. Villegas addresses, “What Does Resurrection Mean?” Villegas wrote:

“Easter is an ending without a conclusion, a story without finality. The end returns us back to the beginning—to Galilee, where Jesus was born, where he was baptized, where he gathered disciples, where he healed the sick, fed the hungry, and preached the good news. Resurrection means that nothing, not even death, will prevent Jesus’ invitation for us—who are weak and fearful, bewildered by a world we can’t control—to follow messengers who guide into the mysteries of Christ in the here and now.”

Jesus promised new life through him. The chains of the power that our sins had over us in death, were destroyed in Jesus’ resurrection. We are lead back to the beginning to share this good news of freedom, liberation, and new life in Him. Our debt has been paid! Our chains are broken! This is a day that we celebrate: He is risen! And we say, “He is risen, indeed!” He has set us free!

There is a song that has reminded me of this Easter message. I found the story behind the song. The song was written by Zack Williams, called, “Song of Deliverance.” Chris Carpenter, program director for CBN, asked Zack Williams to share his story. This is quoted from that interview.

“Yeah, I grew up in a very Christian home. My dad led worship and my mom sang on the worship team with him. We were in church every Sunday and every Wednesday. My parents really planted that seed and that foundation in me at an early age in my life. Honestly, I get to talk about it a lot, but I know I had it not been for that I wouldn’t be here. I hear people talk about it all the time, train your child up in the ways of the Lord. And that was it. Had it not been for their relationship with God and just serving as the example that they were to myself and to others, just the example for Christ that they were, I wouldn’t be here and wouldn’t have these opportunities.

I wouldn't have known that there was a God or anything to come back home to. But like most kids, we've all got to find our way. We think we know more than our parents. And that was the case for me. When I turned 15 or 16 years old, everything that I'd been taught, everything I knew about who God was, the world kind of creeps into everything. I started experimenting with drugs and alcohol. I started running around with the wrong crowd. By my senior year of high school, I was making some really bad decisions. I lost a basketball scholarship and I found myself jumping out of high school the last semester of my senior year. I got a GED and I went to work for my dad's construction company.

I thought, well, here it is, my life's over. What am I going to do now? I just remember that my parents never judged me. There were never ultimatums from them. They always supported and prayed for me. I can look back and say, man, how hard was that for my dad and mom to see me live this other life. How can they stay strong in their faith? They continued to pray for me, and they knew God had a plan for my life.

They used to pray Jeremiah 29:11 over me. And I remember, trying to understand what that actually meant. Just recently, I really discovered that they spoke this over me as I was growing up. So, in my late twenties and early thirties, here I am, I've been trying to be this rock star and live this new lifestyle that I had created for myself. All I've ever done is fail, stumble, fall and hit dead end road after dead end road. Here I was, 30 years old, walking through some of my darkest times because I was trying to figure out what was I doing with my life. I just found myself at the end of my rope.

The only thing left was to just cry out to God. And that was it. I remember coming home from a tour in 2012 when I was 33 years old. My wife had just had our second child together. It was our fourth child as a family. And we were in the middle of deciding whether to make this work or to get a divorce? Are we going to try to salvage this marriage and this relationship? And I just remember that God really showed himself to me on that tour. I came home and I remember falling on my hands and knees on my bedroom floor, not even knowing what I was praying. I didn't know what I was saying, but I just knew that I was sick and tired of this life.

I was asking God to just come and save me from this life I had created. I just remember feeling this immediate relief and for the first time, not feeling like I had somebody sitting on my chest. It was like this breath that I could breathe. And I realized that I don't have to go back to that life anymore. I can do anything I want to in life. I never turned back and wanted to go backwards. God started revealing Himself to me and showing me this plan that He has had for my life all along. Part of that was I'm going to live through some dark days and I'm going to see some things that a lot of people don't see. But now that I've gone through it, I'm realizing there's a lot of us that do live through that and they go through that. Here's a cool thing. He's allowed my story to be something that I can share with people and to show people the goodness of who God is and what He can do with somebody's life."

May we be blessed by the hope that we celebrate in our new life in Jesus and have the courage to share our stories with one another. May we truly celebrate this day that our chains have fallen. We have been set free. He lives! He is risen! He is risen indeed! Praise be to God! I asked Paul to sing the Song of Deliverance for us, so that we might meditate on what our new life in the freedom of Jesus means to us.

Song of Deliverance by Zack Williams

Hard times and high waters  
On the road that I have wandered  
Bridges left burning  
A lot of dead-end learning  
Stone walls, I've built up  
Trapped by the way I've been livin'  
I don't wanna be a prisoner  
I don't wanna be a prisoner

I will sing a song of deliverance  
I will lift my hands and drop these chains  
Walk out free in Jesus name  
I will sing a song of deliverance  
Whoa, Hallelujah  
Whoa-ho, I am free

Get behind me, Satan  
No more fear and no more shame  
My debts been paid  
I am no longer your slave

I will sing a song of deliverance  
I will lift my hands and drop these chains  
Walk out free in Jesus name  
I will sing a song of deliverance  
Whoa, Hallelujah  
Whoa-ho, I am free  
Oh you know I am free

Hey, I don't wanna be a prisoner  
I will sing a song of deliverance  
I will lift my hands and drop these chains  
Walk out free in Jesus name  
I will sing a song of deliverance  
Whoa, Hallelujah  
Whoa-ho, I am free  
Oh you know I am free

#### OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS TO GOD

**Many thanks for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of the church.**

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**As an act of worship, please consider keeping current in your tithes and offerings. Even though the church building is closed, we still have financial obligations we need to meet. The mailbox will be checked daily. The address is: Johnsville United Methodist Church, 11106 Green Valley Road, Union Bridge, MD 21791**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below:  
Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Praise God, the source of all our gifts!  
Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!  
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit!  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Offering Prayer: (John 20, Mark 16)

Gracious God, for saving us from death; for opening our tombs, and casting aside our burial garments; for all that you have given to us, we give you our unending thanks and praise. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Closing Hymn

"Up from the Grave He Arose"

UMH 322

1. Low in the grave he lay,  
Jesus my Savior,  
waiting the coming day,  
Jesus my Lord!

*Refrain*

Up from the grave he arose (he arose)  
with a mighty triumph o'er his foes; (o'er his foes)  
He arose a victor from the dark domain,  
And he lives forever, with his saints to reign.  
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

2. Vainly they watch his bed,  
Jesus my Savior;  
vainly they seal the dead,  
Jesus my Lord!

3. Death cannot keep its prey,  
Jesus my Savior;  
he tore the bars away,  
Jesus my Lord!

*Refrain*

BENEDICTION

He Lives! He Lives! Christ Jesus lives today! Our deliver has come we are free, the chains are gone!  
Praise be to our Lord and Savior! Go forth in joy sharing the good news.

POSTLUDE

"The Day of Resurrection" (Smart)