

Easter Sunday - April 5, 2026

## Call to Worship

This is the good news—the cross is empty.

**The grave is empty!**

This is the good news—the light shines in the darkness

**and the darkness can never put it out.**

This is the good news—the Word is near you.

**It is in your mouth and in your heart**

This is the good news—once we were no people,

**now we are God's people**

Christ is Risen!

**Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

## Hymn

*Jesus Christ is risen today*

**243**

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| <p>1. Jesus Christ is risen today,<br/>hallelujah!<br/>our triumphant holy day,<br/>hallelujah!<br/>who did once upon the cross,<br/>hallelujah!<br/>suffer to redeem our loss,<br/>hallelujah!</p> <p>3. But the pains which he endured<br/>hallelujah!<br/>our salvation have procured;<br/>hallelujah!<br/>now above the sky he's King,<br/>hallelujah!<br/>where the angels ever sing,<br/>hallelujah!</p> | <p>2. Hymns of praise then let us sing<br/>hallelujah!<br/>unto Christ our heavenly King,<br/>hallelujah!<br/>who endured the cross and grave,<br/>hallelujah!<br/>sinners to redeem and save,<br/>hallelujah!</p> <p>4. Sing we to our God above,<br/>hallelujah!<br/>praise eternal as his love;<br/>hallelujah!<br/>praise him, all ye heavenly host,<br/>hallelujah!<br/>Father, Son and Holy Ghost,<br/>hallelujah!</p> |
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"Jesus Christ is risen today." Words: Anonymous (Latin); English trans. By Tate and Brady's New Version 1698. V.4 by Charles Wesley. Public domain.

## Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Holy and Eternal God,  
perfect in love and endless in grace,  
governor of the days and seasons,  
creator of all things visible and invisible;  
filled with glory, majesty and honour,

on this first day you began creation,  
bringing order and life out of chaos.

On this first day you began your new creation,  
raising Jesus Christ from the powers of death.

On this first day, we gather to join with all creation to worship  
and honour you as the Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit, now and always.

As we recall who you are and what you have done, we recall who we are and what  
we have done. Hear us now as we confess to you our sins:

**Gracious God,**

**our sins are too heavy to carry, too real to hide and too deep to undo.**

**Forgive what our lips are afraid to name and what our hearts can no longer bear.**

**Set us free from a past we cannot change, open us to a future in which we can  
be changed and give us the grace to grow more and more in your likeness and  
image. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. Easter Sunday. April 5, 2026. Year A.

## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

Hear the good news: The tomb is empty.

Death has been defeated.

The powers of this world have not won.

In Jesus Christ, God has broken the hold of sin and death.

In Jesus Christ, a new creation has begun.

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and made new.

Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia.

## **Prayer for Understanding**

O Christ, after your resurrection you appeared to your disciples;  
you breathed on them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

Breathe on us that we might receive your spirit  
to recognize you in the reading of your Word. Amen.

## **Scripture Readings**

### **❖ Acts 10:34-43 *Gentiles Hear the Good News***

<sup>34</sup> Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, <sup>35</sup> but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. <sup>36</sup> You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup> That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: <sup>38</sup> 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. <sup>39</sup> 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; <sup>40</sup> but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to

appear, <sup>41</sup> 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. <sup>42</sup> 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. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

### ❖ **John 20:1-18 *The Resurrection of Jesus***

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> 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.” <sup>3</sup> Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. <sup>4</sup> The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, <sup>7</sup> and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; <sup>9</sup> for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then the disciples returned to their homes.

#### ***Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene***

<sup>11</sup> But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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.” <sup>14</sup> When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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.” <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup> 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.’” <sup>18</sup> 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.

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### **Message Raised to New Life**

Years ago, when our children were teenagers, we made a trip to Disneyland in Los Angeles during the school spring break. There was a wonderful and unexpected moment as we got on a large tourist bus taking us to Universal Studios and I heard my name. Not just my name, but my name said by a voice I recognized. There sitting just seats across

from us was my eldest son's former grade six teacher and her family. By this point the teacher had moved on to another community, so I had not seen or spoken to her in some time. On top of that, I had also been her son's piano teacher. We talked all the way to our destination. We never saw them again on our trip or since, but that moment of recognition brought joy and connection. So much so that I still remember it today some twenty some years later.

Going to a class reunion can have the same moments of joy as you recognize or are recognized by someone you haven't seen in years. Even weddings, funerals, or gatherings to remember someone who has passed, will have moments where long-time separation of friends or family due to distance or just plain busy lives has one greeting another by name.

Hearing our names, being able to call another by name, means connection. It means there is a relationship. It may or may not be a deep connection but there is still something that binds people when their name is spoken. It means that you have been important enough to be remembered and recognized. To be recognized means that you are known to another in some capacity.

There is a verse in chapter 10 of the Gospel of John where Jesus says to his disciples, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me."<sup>1</sup> (John 10:27).

Now, hold onto those words of Jesus as you think of hearing the voice of someone you know and recognizing it, even without actually seeing the person. Not so hard to do as we are able to achieve that on the phone all the time. And keep that verse in mind as we delve into this resurrection story. "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me."

The resurrection story in each of the gospels are told in slightly different ways, with an emphasis on different parts of the story or with details that may be in one account but not another. This should not surprise us. Each of the writers shared their stories with different audiences, each had their own memory of the experience and the stories that were told. Just like you and I could each go to the same play, concert, or worship service, and take away different highlights and lowlights, things that we would love and things that we just didn't even notice.

And today, though I could weave a sermon around any one of the characters of Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter, the unnamed disciple that Jesus loved, the angels, or Jesus himself, from John's gospel story, the one character that has my attention is Mary.

We are given many details about Mary in this retelling of the resurrection story. Mary came to the tomb on the first day of the week, while it was still dark and she saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. Consider how you would feel or what you would

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<sup>1</sup> All scripture quotations taken from, *New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition*. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

be thinking if it had been you that came upon this unexpected scene. You have come to grieve, to mourn, to be alone in your sadness and your tears and you are jerked into another reality. The tomb is open. What has happened?

In Mary's case, she runs to Simon Peter, and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and says to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." (v2) She went to grieve and finds that Jesus' body is gone. Is this a conspiracy? Her first thought was that someone had taken the body and the thought of not knowing what had happened or where the body was...well it is too much.

The two disciples go running to check it out and they have their experience, and their story, but for the moment that it is as far as they go. They head back to their homes. One would be led to believe they didn't share it with anyone else, or at the very least their stories have been shared very privately. And the scene returns to Mary. She has not gone back home. She remained. Her grief was deep. She was deeply distressed. Tears streamed down her face.

Think of the trauma of this whole event. She has witnessed it all. She was there when Jesus hung from the cross. She was there when he cried out to God from the cross, and she heard Jesus take his last breath. Unlike other disciples who had scattered, she and other women stayed, witnessed, and felt their hearts torn from them in their grief.

On this morning, Mary just wanted to be near to Jesus and the closest she was going to get was outside the tomb carved from the rock. This action is not unlike anyone who goes to a graveside to remember in order to just feel a little closer to the person they loved. And she is confronted with an unexpected and to her, horrifying realization...the stone has been rolled away. Confusion and grief, fear and anger, all coming together. All of it was so over the top that she doesn't even seem to question the fact that she sees two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying. She doesn't run off or tremble in fear as they speak to her, which in scriptures most often what happens with the appearance of an angel or angels, which is unlike the comfort we prefer to think of when it comes to angels.

And the angels question her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" Her answer, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." (v13).

Sit with that a moment.

Can you feel the layers of grief? Not only is she dealing with his death, but now this indignity, this not knowing. She just wants to know where he is.

Then she turned around and saw this person that we are told is Jesus, but Mary did not recognize him. She didn't know it was him. He too asks her, "Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking? Then 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.'" (vv15-16). Her concern is so great. She just wants to know where Jesus' body is. That is her only focus.

...and then, then Jesus said to her, "Mary!" He said her name! It was in her name that the voice, the recognition, the love, the hope, the connection, the miracle of it all hits her. She now knows that voice. To hear her name spoken by the one that she was seeking in death, to hear her name spoken by the living Jesus, that is everything. "She turned and said to him Rabbouni, (which means Teacher.) This is the one who has taught her so much. This is the one who she watched feed multitudes of people, teach, and heal. This is the one with whom she was connected, and he has said her name.

Remember the earlier verse, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me." The shepherd is the one who tends the sheep, keeps them safe, shows them the way they should go, and searches for them when they are lost. This is the voice of the shepherd, the teacher, her Rabbi. He is alive and she recognizes him and, in that, Jesus shows that he knows her. Even in this resurrected body, he has not forgotten who she is. The relationship is restored.

She so must have wanted to hold onto him, and maybe even Jesus wanted to hold onto her, but the story is not done. Jesus gives Mary instructions. These words shared by Mary with the disciples mean that it was a woman that was the first to share Jesus' resurrection story with others. Jesus says to her, "...go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'"

And Mary does go to them, but her first words, are the announcement, "I have seen the Lord" and things will never be the same! Then she tells them what Jesus asked her to say.

Remember that verse, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me." There is a little more to that as it also says, "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand."

Maybe you are someone who has heard the voice of Jesus. It may not have been audible. It may have been an experience that just had you knowing that the hand of God was in it...that God was with you. You don't forget when that has happened to you. It helps you get through everything else that you face in life, the grief, the loss, the struggles. Some people are fortunate enough to have more than one very real encounter with the risen Christ. It may be in crisis or it might be in nature. It may be profound or it may be in the small blessings of love and light in a day. Somehow, in these experiences you know that Jesus, that God, knows your name and you recognize God in those moments.

It may also be that you have never had that experience. That is okay. Jesus never stops looking for the ones that are lost or yet to know him, or want to hear him say their name in some recognizable way. Trust that you are not alone. God is with you whether or not you realize or recognize it. Look for God in the sunset or sunrise, the wind of the storm, or the glistening of snowflakes in the sun, the trickling of water, or the warm smile or embrace of someone who cares for you or you for them.

This Jesus who spoke Mary's name and said, share with others, is the same Jesus who speaks our name and says share love, compassion, and grace with others. Share with them who I am.

You don't have to stand and shout it from a street corner. You just share through acts of justice, kindness, and compassion, but please don't forget to say Jesus' name. It means something, there is power in the name of Jesus.

Today we celebrate the resurrection, but it is only a beginning. Jesus will ascend to the Father, to be united in the Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Resurrection is the promise of release from death and what feels like death and loss, but it is ascension, Jesus going to be with the Father that leads to an ongoing and abiding connection and relationship with God. This story did not end with the scriptures we read in the Bible, the story is to be continued in you, in me, and always. Go and tell your story, go and tell the story of Jesus now and always.

I speak to you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Prayers of the People**

Loving God, it is because of this day that we designate the week gone by as Holy. How much we have learned through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, for that event reveals to us the extensiveness of your grace, the breadth of your forgiveness, the limitlessness of your power, and the passion of your love for humankind.

We are overwhelmed and filled with hope when you call us by name and make yourself known to us. In the same moment we realize that we are known to you and are loved deeper than we could have imagined.

We pray that our faith be enriched and energized daily by prayerful contact with the risen Christ. And we ask that you guide us toward the way of resurrection living.

When we are despondent or grieving, bereft of hope or mourning loss, grant us visions of new opportunities and appreciations of past gifts.

When we feel emptiness within certain portions of our being or lack of resources for the task at hand remind us that an empty tomb is the sign of new life and that your Spirit is ever-resourceful.

When and where people hunger for justice or sustenance, help us to claim our Christly roles as table-setters and servants, offerers of the Bread of Life in all its forms.

When and where people need the comfort of connection with caring people, enable us to reach out in fellowship to reveal the joy of companionship with Christ.

We pray now in the name of the One whose resurrection we celebrate and whose words we share, saying...

Adapted from © Glen E. Rainsley. *Hear Our Prayer: Resource for Worship and Devotions*. United Church Press. Cleveland, Ohio. 1996. P123.

## Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen**

## Invitation to the Offering

On Easter Day, we celebrate God's most precious gift to us in Christ's dying and his rising.

As we present our gifts to God this morning, may our generosity reflect God's goodness, and the hope we have in Christ Jesus, our Risen Lord.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. Easter Sunday. April 5, 2026. Year A.

You are invited and encouraged to financially support St. Andrew's ministry through our website, [St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay, ON – Part of the PCCWeb network of churches](#)

## Hymn

*I danced in the morning/Lord of the dance!*

**250**

1. I danced in the morning when the world was begun,  
and I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun,  
and I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth;  
at Bethlehem I had my birth.

### *Refrain*

*Dance, then, wherever you may be;  
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,  
and I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,  
and I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.*

2. I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee,  
but they would not dance and they wouldn't follow me;  
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John;  
they came with me and the dance went on.

### *Refrain*

3. I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame:  
the holy people said it was a shame.  
They whipped and they stripped and they hung me high,  
and they left me there on a cross to die:

### *Refrain*

4. I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black;  
it's hard to dance with the devil on your back.  
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone;  
but I am the dance, and I still go on:

*Refrain*

5. They cut me down and I leap up high;  
I am the life that'll never, never die;  
I'll live in you if you'll live in me:  
I am the Lord of the dance, said he.

*Refrain*

"Lord of the dance." Words by Sydney Carter. © 1963, Stainer & Bell, Ltd., London, England. (admin. by Hope Publishing Co.)  
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## **Benediction**

Go now in the blessing of God,  
who meets death with life, hatred with love,  
and hopeless endings with abundant possibilities,  
to build a community of life, love, and flourishing as Easter people,  
followers of the Risen Christ! Amen.

*Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, September 2025.*  
[Discipleship Ministries | Easter Sunday, Year A - Liturgical Resources](#)