Easter is the day we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Easter is the most important day in the Christian calendar as we rejoice in his eternal presence with us. Halleluiah!

Resurrected God,
Would we recognize you? Would we understand the incredible power you have over death? Grant us the peace that was present in the garden in those moments before your resurrection, and may we spread that peace as the women who first saw you alive spread the news of your resurrection! Help us to recognize opportunities for peace that once seemed extinguished now as new soil for growing peace. Clear away our doubts that peace may not come, and show us how to create peace across the world. Amen.

—Caleb and Tiffany Brian

Spiritual Practice
Centering Prayer

Read the following to the group:
Centering prayer is a meditation used by Christians to sit in silence with God. This prayer helps us experience God’s presence within us. This Easter Day we will focus on the word rejoice.

Slowly read the following instructions:
Sit with posture relaxed and eyes closed. We will spend three minutes in centering prayer. We will breathe in a regular, natural rhythm. As you breathe in and out, you will say the word rejoice in your mind. You will continue breathing in and out, focusing only on your prayer word.

At the end of the three minutes, I will ring a chime, and we will sit for two minutes in silence, eyes closed, listening to the silence.
Begin the practice together, modeling the centering prayer as instructed above. Say: Become aware of your natural breathing in and out. (Breathe a few times in and out.) Say: Now silently add your prayer word. (Model breathing in and quietly saying *rejoice*. Breathe out and say *rejoice* quietly. Continue the centering prayer in silence. Discontinue saying the prayer word out loud after you model it the first time.)

After three minutes, ring a chime. Sit quietly for two minutes. When time is up, share these closing instructions: Silently offer a brief word of thanks to God, take a deep breath, and open your eyes when ready. When everyone’s eyes are open, share the following: I encourage you to use this spiritual practice at home during the week.

**Sharing Around the Table**

**Matthew 28:1–10, John 20:1–18 NRSV**

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.” So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

...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 toward 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 around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” 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.

The Gospel of John presents Jesus as the Risen Lord, the Messiah, and Son of God; one in whom all should have faith. The resurrection account is the climax of that faith statement and, for John, the final proof of Jesus’ identity. In John’s account of Easter morning the people who came to the tomb had very different responses. Peter saw the empty tomb and empty shroud where the body had been. But he left without fully understanding what had taken place. The beloved disciple looked into the empty tomb, and “believed” instantly. Mary Magdalene saw the empty tomb and thought the body had been moved or stolen. Even when she encountered the Risen Christ she mistook him for the gardener. Her eyes were opened only when he spoke her name.

Questions

1. Which response resonates with you? Not fully understanding? Instant belief? Or deeper faith through personal relationship with the Divine?
2. How have you experienced God calling you by name?
3. From the testimonies, faith, and actions of these first witnesses came a movement that grew and changed the world. How does living a life of faith and witness continue to make a difference in the world today?

Sending

Generosity Statement

Faithful disciples respond to an increasing awareness of the abundant generosity of God by sharing according to the desires of their hearts; not by commandment or constraint. —Doctrine and Covenants 163:9

The offering basket is available if you would like to support ongoing, small-group ministries as part of your generous response. This offering prayer is adapted from A Disciple’s Generous Response:

God of rejoicing, We share with joy-filled hearts in response to the presence of your Son. May the offerings we share bring joy, hope, love, and peace into the lives of others that they might experience your mercy and grace. Amen.
Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn

   CCS 478, “Woman, Weeping in the Garden”

Closing Prayer

Optional Additions Depending on Group

- Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper
- Thoughts for Children
Prayer for Peace

Ring a bell or chime three times slowly.
Light the peace candle.

Resurrected God,

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After three minutes, ring a chime.

Sit quietly for two minutes.

When time is up, share these closing instructions: Silently offer a brief word of thanks to God, take a deep breath, and open your eyes when ready.

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Communion Statement

Choose one scripture to read from this selection: 1 Corinthians 11:23–26; Matthew 26:17–30; Mark 14:12–26; Luke 22:7–39.

Invitation to Communion

All are welcome at Christ’s table. The Lord’s Supper, or Communion, is a sacrament in which we remember the life, death, resurrection, and continuing presence of Jesus Christ. In Community of Christ, we also experience Communion as an opportunity to renew our baptismal covenant and to be formed as disciples who live Christ’s mission. Others may have different or added understandings within their faith traditions. We invite all who participate in the Lord’s Supper to do so in the love and peace of Jesus Christ.

This Easter season let us experience the resurrected Christ as we share in Communion as an expression of blessing, healing, peace, and community. In preparation let’s sing from *Community of Christ Sings* (select one):

- CCS 515, “In These Moments We Remember”
- CCS 516, “Coming Together for Wine and for Bread”
- CCS 521, “Let Us Break Bread Together”
- CCS 525, “Small Is the Table”
- CCS 528, “Eat This Bread”
Thoughts for Children

Materials: Easter lily or picture of Easter lily

Every spring the Earth goes through a cycle of birth and regrowth. Trees and flowers begin to blossom, and we see growth everywhere. The new growth helps us remember that Jesus was resurrected and lives again. The Easter lily looks like a trumpet and symbolizes the joy we feel on Easter.

If we use our hands, we can sound like a trumpet. Cup your hands around your mouth and joyfully say “Happy Easter!”

When we say “Happy Easter” to one another, we are remembering that Jesus Christ lives in us and loves us. We “trumpet” or joyfully share that love with others.

Let’s practice being trumpets and saying, “Happy Easter!” to one another.

Show the children how to cup their hands and sound like a trumpet. Encourage the whole group to join in.