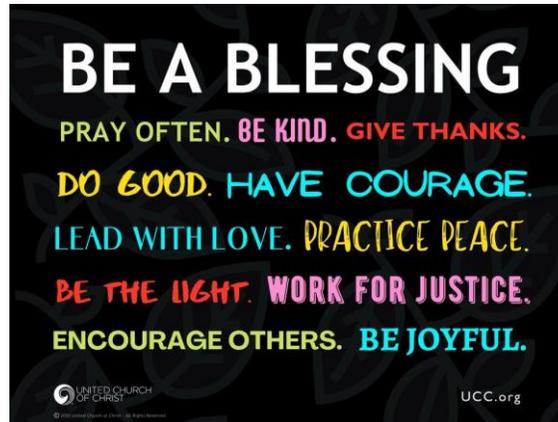


**Second Congregational Church in Newcastle,
United Church of Christ, Newcastle, Maine**

**Second Sunday of Easter: Communion Sunday
Online Worship – April 11, 2021, 10:00 AM**



INVITATION

Welcome to Virtual Worship with the community of Second Congregational Church in Newcastle, United Church of Christ in Newcastle, Maine. From our various spaces, on our various devices, we enter sacred time together. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here. God meets us everywhere and in all our humanness. Be here in this sacred moment. God is with you. God is with us. May this worship of saints be blessed, be nourishing, be comforting, be church.

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP ON COMMUNION SUNDAY:

This Sunday we celebrate the sacrament of Communion. Before the time of the service you will want to prepare some bread and a cup (or use the Communion elements included in your Easter bag delivered to homes during Holy Week). In our tradition, these elements can be what you have at home – a slice or small loaf of bread, tortilla, rice cake, or crackers. Let it be something you alone or you with others in your house may break and share. Prepare a cup or cups of juice (like grape or cranberry) or wine. Ultimately you want to bring to the table the elements that bring you comfort, are common to your household and the people and connect you with others.

Set these elements in the living room or kitchen where you experience worship electronically with our faith community. Some suggestions: perhaps light a candle or place a cross; or place a flower or other symbol of faith and hope on the table; include the photograph of someone you wish to bring into the circle of faith beside the bread and the cup. Follow your heart.

DEVICES

As we gather, please be sure that your device (computer, phone or tablet) is in the mute mode to avoid feedback and background noise. You are encouraged to use the “chat” or “comment” features to offer prayer requests at any time during the service.

***Thank you for your preparation. Let us now be present to the Spirit,
which brings us together and loves us where we are!***

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WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CENTERING MOMENT

CALL TO WORSHIP:

In our uncertainty, **Christ goes before us.**

In our doubts, **Christ remains with us.**

In our fear, **Christ surrounds us.**

In our hope, **Christ is within us.**

In this time of worship,

we strive to follow Jesus, who leads us into life. Alleluia!

HYMN

“Morning Has Broken”

Bunessan

Jane Wilmot, Organ

We will remain muted to avoid audio feedback and lags. Please sing aloud at home or follow along as best as you are able. Remember, it's our spiritual intention that matters!

Link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FJvNGgBJ8g4DGqJl_uJdoz5H_J8auVq4/view?usp=sharing

Morning Has Broken

1. Morn - ing has bro - ken like the first morn - ing, black-bird has
 2. Sweet the rain's new fall sun - lit from heav - en, like the first
 3. Mine is the sun - light! Mine is the morn - ing born of the

spo - ken like the first bird. _____ Praise for the sing - ing!
 dew - fall on the first grass. _____ Praise for the sweet - ness
 one light E - den saw play! _____ Praise with e - la - tion,

Praise for the morn-ing! Praise for them spring-ing fresh from the Word!
 of the wet gar - den, sprung in com-plete-ness where his feet pass.
 praise ev-ery morn-ing God's re - cre - a - tion of the new day!

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CALL TO CONFESSION:

We are reminded over and over of God's gracious forgiveness. But we still find it hard to believe, don't we? And however afraid we are to let go of our old ways, God continues to offer us new life. So, join me in confessing our fears and doubts, especially in these days, to the One who is eager to make us whole.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

Faithful One, we confess our questions, our struggles, and our doubts. We know that You do not condemn us for this, but sometimes we feel bad. We wish our faith were stronger. We wish we had more certainty or needed less of it. However, You love us unconditionally, and You have encouraged us to ask questions and to seek deeper meanings. Remind us that You continue to be with us in our journey of faith, through our doubts and uncertainty. You are the one who leads us in the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Through Jesus Christ we pray all things. Amen.

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS:

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, God’s mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.” God’s steadfast love never ends. God loves you, right now, and will always love you. There is no place you can hide, no place you can get lost, where God will not be with you. You are loved, forgiven, and restored. Live into God’s ways, knowing that you can’t shake God from you, so learn to live with God. Amen.

THE LORD’S PRAYER *Second Church follows the version of the Lord’s Prayer that is offered below. However, you are invited to say this prayer aloud in the tradition that brings you the most comfort.*

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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: 1 John 1:1-2:2 *(New Revised Standard Version):*

The Word of Life

1 We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—² this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—³ we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴We are writing these things so that our^[a] joy may be complete.

God Is Light

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; ⁷ but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Christ Our Advocate

2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ² and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.



REFLECTION

Be A Blessing: Tell the Story

Rev. Char Corbett

It's 2:30am Saturday morning. I'm awake, sitting in a twist on the couch, typing with my laptop set upon the armrest because my blanketed lap has already been claimed by my sleeping dog and one of the housecats. I'm awkwardly attempting to finish writing Sunday's sermon. What I need is a cup of peppermint tea and a stretch (if not sleep!), but alas, Murphy and Polo are respectively (and loudly, I might add) snoring and purring away.

Most weekends I'm not struggling this late into the night, trying to put what's on my mind and in my heart onto paper. Like most sermons, this one too has been growing within me all week. It's translating it from a deep and Spirit-led "illumination" into a tangible, written message that isn't coming effortlessly this time. I can also assure you that connecting 1 John to our lived experiences in the 21st century isn't an easy task at any hour, never mind four hours before the first shafts of light break the night's darkness. Yet, here I am.

As we share and hear this first passage from the writings of 1 John, we cannot deny that it does come with a message, and an important one: that this side of Easter, we must remember that Jesus, the son of God, truly walked and lived among us, not just as a Spirit of God, but as one of us: human. Jesus was human, he was alive, he was as embodied as we are (and as we are in him) and he died gruesomely on an empire cross. Jesus took his last earthly breath as we all will someday. And yet, still, wondrously and mysteriously, beyond all reason and possibility and for the sake of Love, Jesus was resurrected, his body risen and his spirit brought back to life.

Jesus lives with us and within us still. This is the story, the true story of our faith, which we are called to tell, not only for our own joy, but for the eternal joy of the church and the whole world. This joy is meant to be complete. Fulfilled. For all.

Yes, it's been a while since Jesus' resurrection. A long while. And yes, it's the Sunday after Easter. Again. And yes, it's been a week, a year, a lifetime, numerous generations, a few hundred centuries all rolling into more than two millennia now since that First Easter. A long time has come and gone since that glorious, mysterious, joyful moment of revelation, when God sprung all our hearts eternally free with the truth of the empty tomb.

If we are honest, after the thrill and remembrance of the absolute rise of hope divine, after every Easter, things always seem to slowly return to normal too. The party is over, the clean up crew has gone home. It's a new normal certainly. Does anything ever go back to "normal" after resurrection? Are things ever the same after life defies death? I used to think it did. Or could. Or should. But now like you, I have (so far) lived through a pandemic that isn't over. Nothing feels quite the same save for the warmth of the springtime sun while standing in the yard after a long winter. And then given planetary warming, is that even normal nowadays? I digress.

By the glory of God, life lives on. It also moves on. Today's passage passionately focuses on the realities of human sin in our lives and in the world, then and now – after the resurrection. Life, for all its joy and glory, is also mundane, demanding, painful, confusing and complicated, even for those of us who recognize that God is the light and Jesus Christ is risen indeed. As we recall, Jesus, who lived and breathed, who had been seen, heard and touched by our living ancestors and then died righteously by the sins of our world, is our Advocate and always, still, our beloved friend.

It seems like the author of 1 John is defending this truth, this way of living and knowing and believing, against a group who has left the church in the first century. It's now been about 60 years since Jesus was crucified. That's a long time. Perhaps members of this group started out on the journey of resurrection faith full-heartedly. It does seem they were all in covenant at one time. But as time lapsed and life went on with the same hardships and little change as before the resurrection, they began to lose hope. They began to doubt and, as humans do, they started to think, "what if?"

- What if Jesus hadn't really lived all along, hadn't been fully human but only divine?
- What if Jesus was simply a Spirit of God, come to remind us that we have a God to be faithful to already?
- What if we have not sinned, do not sin, are above sin so long as we fear God and follow the religious laws of our faith?
- What if we don't need the fellowship of the church, of God and Christ and one another, but rather it's our own hearts, minds and souls that need attending to?
- What if we don't need Jesus when we have God and the Spirit of Christ now?
- What if Jesus is quite literally dead to us...if he was even alive in the first place?

It's 4:00AM now. Time has proven once again that it is moving on. I need to sleep, and I don't know how to bring this sermon to a place of Good News for those I love, for those who might be struggling with faith, for those who are at the very human place of doubt after Easter stretches long beyond "normal." I don't know how to do it without telling the story of our resurrected faith - again. And I don't know how to tell it without sharing how the hope of the Easter story has moved me once again, to a deeper place of faith in 2021.

You see, I'm up not only at this crazy time of morning to get a sermon written. This week I also became the caretaker of a brood of baby chicks. They're a mix of brown egg-laying hens, which I'd carefully planned for. I prepared and studied all winter long, just as I did for the gardening I've planned and told you about on Easter Sunday. I've been setting my alarm to check on the chicks every few hours; we've made a brooder out of a kiddie pool and they're currently residing in our new mudroom off of the kitchen.

It hasn't been easy, tending to them. My brood of fifteen chicks is now at seven and we're only three days in. There's been a lot of death. I'd prepared for death of course, but this has been more than I bargained for. The distress of the transit was more than my little peeps could bear. I've wept and stomped my feet and hollered to no avail. Stupid hatchery! Stupid USPS! Stupid plan! Stupid chicks! Stupid me!

I know I'm crazy. Who starts a massive garden for the first time AND takes on a brood of chicks in the same year? Stupid, right? It's going to be a lot of work. These are big commitments. Not every chick or plant is going to make it – and I know this.

I also know that because of the pandemic and all the suffering we have witnessed and that my spirit has absorbed, I need to surround myself with life, and lots of it. I need to have a hand in it. I need to be part of it. I need to feel resurrected...alive. I need reminders everywhere that life goes on, is here, will always be. I need to cling to the visible, tangible, audible hope that life and love return again and again no matter what. Not even death will stop life.

Yes, I have my doubts. I'm asking myself a lot of "what ifs" about my plans and all that is taking shape at home, at church, in town, nationally and around the world. I'm scared. I'm angry. And yes, I'm grieved.

But you know what? I've also gotten my hands dirty a lot this week. I mean dirt-under-my-nails-and-in-my-hair kind of dirty as I mixed soil, planted seeds and made mud. And for the first time in my life I washed a chick's pasty butt in my bathroom sink and dried it with a blow dryer on the low setting, just like it said to do in the books. If these things aren't life-giving, I don't know what is!

I've also had to toss a tray of rosemary into the compost because the seeds never came up and the soil molded over. I've had to bury eight sweet chicks who were left to fend for themselves without food or water in a postal box for far too long. Surely that was sinful and I definitely participated in an inhumane and commercialized poultry system. With all my planning, I didn't thoroughly think through the cruelty and consequences of my choices. I need the confession and forgiveness worship offers.

I've also watched as my broccoli, lemon balm and Roma tomatoes have taken off, pushing determinedly through the dirt, stretching for the sun while protected in my kitchen greenhouse. And in-between writing these paragraphs in the middle of the night, I've roused the dog and cat to check on the seven living chicks. This choice has given me the simple and complete joy of giggling with delight in the wee hours of this morning as they chased a tiny spider through the pine shavings. They pecked at it and then ran for cover when it wiggled.

All week long, in moments of doubt, disbelief, grief and frustration, I've had to call upon my family, friends and neighbors. I've peppered them with questions, gleaned from their wisdom, been blessed by their empathy and encouragement and been held in prayer as I shed tears. I've also shared with them the joys and breakthroughs and posted pictures on Facebook. I know more deeply now that I couldn't do these life-giving things alone, even with all the planning and research I did on my own. It's a matter of mind, spirit, heart, body and the sweet, blessed life connection of all things.

More fully than any other Easter I can recall, I've remembered that the mysteries of life and death are in God's hands and by the grace of God and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I get to be part of it all – the good and the very hard. We all do, through the choices we make, the actions we take, the words we speak, the forgiveness we ask for, give and receive. As Christians, we get to pass on the living Easter story in the short time we've been gifted, as it's the core of all the resurrection stories we live into.

This, my friends is how our joy is made complete. Love is who God is. This is what matters. This is when Jesus, our embodied friend and Advocate, walks beside us, teaching and encouraging each step of the way. This is why we need one another. This is Love, and Life and Death and Resurrection. This is the fully human experience that Jesus knew and knows so well.

May we make this our lived and living story. And as we receive the bread and cup this morning, may we be a blessing, and bravely tell the resurrection story of Jesus Christ to the whole world, no matter what time it is! Amen.

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A MOMENT OF REMEMBERING AND GIVING THANKS

DOXOLOGY: *Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God, for all that love has done.
Creator, Christ and Spirit, One. Amen.*

Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zf9vXKaxxAb6dJhE3Z67dlc0oJK5rC3W/view?usp=sharing>

COMMUNION ANTHEM

“If I Have Been the Source of Pain”

Camuqua

Sung by the Second Singers

Video and recording produced by Peter Asche

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YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xrEkOy1s5zg>

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THE SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION AT HOME

Communion will be shared together virtually from our own homes.

EASTER AFFIRMATION OF FAITH¹

We believe in God,
the giver of grain and bread,
and in Jesus Christ,
the bread of life broken for us,
and in the Holy Spirit,
God's nourishing power in every grain and loaf.

We believe that Christ is to be leaven in us,
so that we may offer the bread of life
to the hungers of every human heart.

INVITATION

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey,
You are welcome at God's table. You are welcome here. Amen.

BLESSING OF THE BREAD AND CUP

¹ ~ written by Alvin Franz Brightbill (adapted).

We pause to ask God's blessing of grace be upon this Communion table and the many tables in our homes, where meals and memories are shared, and we are forever united in Spirit. May God's blessing touch all the sacramental elements of bread and drink prepared. May God's blessings be upon all of us gathered and all those who are in our prayers this morning.

All (together but muted): Gentle Host, send your Spirit of life and love, power and blessing upon us all, scattered but gathered in joy for the sake of You and living in hope for all. Risen Christ, live in us, that we may live in you. Breathe in us, that we may breathe in you. Amen.

WORDS OF REMEMBERING:

We remember that on the night of betrayal and desertion, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to the disciples, saying: "This is my body, broken for you. As often as you eat of it, do so in remembrance of me."

In the same manner, Jesus took the cup, blessed it and gave it to the disciples, saying: "This is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for you. As often as you drink of it, do so in remembrance of me." By eating this bread and drinking this cup, we proclaim Christ's birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection, and we live forever in the hope that Christ will come again.

SHARING THE ELEMENTS:

Let us at our many tables in churches, on the streets and at home, receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven. **We become the Body of Christ in the Bread we share.** *(Let us eat bread together, recalling our communal relationship with the Spirit and one another).*

Let us in our many places around the world receive the gift of God, the Cup of Blessing. **We are one in Christ in the Cup we share.** *(Let us all drink, recalling our individual devotion to God, our love of Christ and the Spirit of hope).*

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:

Loving God, you are the font of every blessing, the source of all we have. Your breath gives us life, your love gives us courage and strength, your grace gives us healing and compassion. You care for us and feed our spirits, our minds, and our bodies. We thank you for your abundance given freely to all. May we so live that our lives reflect our faith in You, knowing that your Light is meant to be shared with all our brothers and sisters, your children of the world. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN "There's A Spirit in the Air" (Next Page) *Orientis Partibus*
We will remain muted to avoid audio feedback and lags. Please listen to the recording, sing aloud at home or follow along as best as you are able. Remember, it's our spiritual intention that matters!)

Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/10GQMrVUAIGb0XU6BDTMHp2cy2qV-6xIM/view?usp=sharing>

There's a Spirit In the Air

1. There's a spir - it in the air, tell - ing Chris - tians ev - ery-where:
 2. Lose your shy - ness, find your tongue; tell the world what God has done:
 3. When be - liev - ers break the bread, when a hun - gry child is fed:
 4. Still the spir - it gives us light, see - ing wrong and set - ting right:
 5. When a strang - er's not a - lone, where the home - less find a home.
 6. May the Spir - it fill our praise, guide our thoughts and change our ways.
 7. There's a Spir - it in the air, call - ing peo - ple ev - ery-where:

"Praise the love that Christ re-vealed, liv - ing, work - ing in our world,"
 God in Christ has come to stay. Live to - mor - row's life to - day.
 praise the love that Christ re-vealed, liv - ing, work - ing in our world.
 God in Christ has come to stay. Live to - mor - row's life to - day.
 praise the love that Christ re-vealed, liv - ing, work - ing in our world.
 God in Christ has come to stay. Live to - mor - row's life to - day.
 praise the love that Christ re-vealed, liv - ing, work - ing in our world.

WORDS: Brian Wren, 1969, rev. 1987

MUSIC: Medieval French melody; harm. Richard Redhead, 1853.

ORIENTIS PARTIBUS
77.77

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BENEDICTION²

Go in peace with the Spirit of God at your side, seeking goodness and compassion. Tell God of your gratitude. Remember to pray every day for others. Disrupt harm and seek justice. Show loving kindness. Share words of hope and peace with everyone you meet. Amen.

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Today's Worship has been prepared, sent out, offered and led by:

- ▶ **Peter Asche**, Recording and editing;
- ▶ **Bill Bausch**, Communications & Technology Support; Snippets Meister
- ▶ **Rev. Char Corbett**, Pastor
- ▶ **Jim Corbett**, Videographer and Technical Support
- ▶ **Jane Wilmot**, Minister of Music; Organ

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² Benediction written by Pastor Char Corbett 3-2-2021.

Have a question about Second Church or today's service? A concern or a joy to share? A prayer request? We're here to listen and respond! Contact our Pastor, Deacons or Pastoral Relations Committee:

- ▶ **Lonnie Anderson**, Deacon/Spirit Team Chairperson: lonnieba@gmail.com
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