

## Easter Sunrise Service

April 5, 2026

“From Darkness into Dawn”

We begin in the quiet before the sun rises,  
in the stillness where night has not yet released its hold.  
We gather not knowing all that will be revealed,  
but trusting that light is already on its way.

In this liminal hour,  
we remember that life often begins in hidden places,  
and hope stirs before it is seen.

Let us be still.

*Silence*

**Hymn:** “Morning Has Broken”

VU #409

This is the day of dawn breaking,  
the day when stone is not the final word,  
the day when love rises unseen and unstoppable.

**We stand in the threshold between night and morning.**

Let the light come.

**Let it find us awake.**

As this light is kindled,  
so hope awakens within and among us.  
What was hidden begins to emerge;  
what was lost is found again in new form.

**Light has begun its work among us.**

## **Gospel Reading** John 20:1-18 (Paraphrase)

Early, when the night still lingered at the edges of the world and the first light had not yet found its voice, Mary Magdalene came walking in the hush of dawn. The earth was quiet beneath her feet, and grief walked with her as a companion. She came to the place where love had been laid in stone, where hope had seemed to end in silence.

But the stone was no longer in its place.

Rolled away.

And the stillness she carried within her gave way to urgency. Without fully understanding what she had seen, she turned and ran. Breath gathered in her chest like a prayer unspoken. She found Simon Peter and the one whom Jesus loved, and her words came in fragments, shaped by fear and wonder: the tomb was open... the body was gone... something had been taken, though she could not name what remained.

So the two of them rose and went, their steps quickened by longing and uncertainty. They ran together, though one outpaced the other, arriving first at the threshold of absence. He bent and looked within, where linen lay folded in quiet order, as though even death had been gently unwrapped. He did not enter, but waited in the thin space between knowing and believing.

Simon Peter arrived and entered without hesitation. He saw what was left behind—cloth and stillness arranged not in haste, but in a strange and careful calm. And the other followed, stepping inside the hollowed place. There, in the silence that had once held death, something new began to stir within him. He saw, and in the seeing, belief took root—though understanding had not yet fully come, for the deeper meaning of rising was still hidden like a seed beneath winter ground.

And so they returned, carrying questions more than answers, each one walking back into the world as it had been, though something unseen had already begun to change.

But Mary remained.

She stood outside the tomb as one who would not let go of love so easily. Tears fell into the dust, and grief opened her inward gaze. She bent once more and looked into the place of emptiness, and this time she saw more than absence. Two figures in white were there, keeping watch at the place where love had lain down its life.

“Woman,” they asked, “why are you weeping?”

And she spoke from the depth of her loss: “They have taken my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

Then she turned.

And in that turning, without knowing, she met the presence she sought. Jesus stood there, though her eyes could not yet recognize him. The gardener, she thought—one who tends to what grows from the earth.

He spoke her name.

“Mary.”

And in that single naming, the veil thinned. Recognition rose like dawn breaking over the horizon of her heart. The one she thought lost stood alive before her, and her voice answered in wonder, in reverence, in belonging: “Rabbouni.”

Teacher.

Jesus gently spoke again, calling her beyond holding and clinging, sending her instead into movement and witness. What she had seen was not to be contained, but shared. What

had been revealed was not only for her, but for all who would hear.

And so Mary went.

She carried the news like a flame sheltered from the wind, and she spoke it into the gathered community: "I have seen the Lord."

In her voice, the first proclamation of dawn found its shape. In her steps, grief began its transformation. And in her seeing, a new world quietly began to unfold.

*Brief Pause*

## **Song**

### **To this day God has given...**

In the hush before recognition,  
Mary stands in the garden of grief and surprise.

She does not yet know resurrection,  
only absence, confusion, and longing.

And yet even in her not-knowing,  
love has already moved ahead of her.

A voice calls her name.

And in that naming,  
the world turns.

What was sealed is opened.

What was ended begins again.

What seemed final is now a threshold.

**We have stood in our own gardens of uncertainty.**

**We have known absence and silence.**

**And still, we listen for the voice that calls us by name.**

**Resurrection is not only an event of the past,  
but a movement that continues to unfold among us,  
whenever despair gives way to courage,  
whenever endings become beginnings,  
whenever love refuses to remain buried.**

Let us give thanks.

We give thanks for this dawn,  
for the quiet turning of the world toward light,  
for the mystery that life is stronger than death,  
and hope more enduring than fear.

We give thanks for the voices that call us by name,  
for the moments when recognition breaks open our hearts,  
and for the grace that meets us before we are ready.

**We receive this day as gift.**

Let us pray.

For all who sit in darkness this morning,  
for those who wait in grief, uncertainty, or longing:

**Let light rise within and around them.**

For the earth awakening with the sun,  
for all living things stirred toward renewal:

**Let light rise within and around them.**

For communities seeking healing, justice, and peace:

**Let light rise within and around them.**

For ourselves, as we step forward into what is not yet fully known:

**Let light rise within and around us.**

Christ is risen.

**Christ is risen indeed.**

Life has not been abandoned.

**Love has not been overcome.**

The stone has been moved.

**And we are not the same.**

May the dawn within you rise gently and steadily.

May the light you carry deepen into wisdom.

May the love you share become a path for others.

And may you walk into this day  
as one who has already been found.

Go in peace, and rise with hope.

**Amen.**

**Song**      “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today”

VU #157