

COMMUNITY EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE ON THE PORCH

Sunday, April 12th, 2020

We are so glad you're considering joining this community effort to celebrate the resurrection of Christ from your porch at sunrise this Easter! This guide was created with the intention of being as simple, accessible, and ecumenical as possible so that all Christians from every branch of the Christian Church could feel welcome to participate. In other words, we tried to use elements of worship here that all Christians would have in common! Feel free to use this word-for-word, or to add and change anything that will work better for you. What's important is that you celebrate Christ and His victory this Easter! Shortly before His death on the cross, Jesus prayed for us, His followers: "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me," (John 17:21 NIV). Imagine if one of the unexpected blessings of this challenging season of social distancing was the unity of Christians from all denominations worshipping the Lord throughout the community on their porches? Help us spread the word!

• **BEFORE YOU START**

Review these ideas and come up with a plan that works best for you. Also, look up the sunrise time for your geographic area. Google says the projected sunrise time for Montour County, PA, is 6:31am. Head outside to your front porch (or wherever works best at your home) to begin your worship time **5 minutes before Sunrise**.

1. THE EASTER STORY

Start by reading out loud the Easter Story from Matthew 28.

Matthew 28:1-10, 16-20 (NIV)

¹ After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. ² There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. ⁵ The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." ⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." ...¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

2. THE APOSTLES' CREED

Depending on your church background, you might be very familiar with the Apostles' Creed, or you might know very little about it. For centuries, going back to the early church, Christians all over the world from different traditions have recited this statement of faith in worship and they continue to today. These words describe the basic beliefs of Christianity and unite Christians from all backgrounds.

The Ecumenical Version is listed here, but if you're familiar with another version you are welcome to recite that instead. Declare these powerful words together in faith:

***I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.***

*This means the "universal" church in this context.

3. THE LORD'S PRAYER

Pray the Lord's Prayer together. Once again, use whichever version you are familiar with if different from the form below:

***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 sins*, as we forgive those who sin* 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.***

*Or debts / debtors, or trespasses / trespass

4. AMAZING GRACE

There are so *many* wonderful hymns and songs of praise we could sing to celebrate this moment—and you are encouraged to sing as many as you want! We chose this song (text by John Newton, 1779) because it is simple, well known, and well loved:

**Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind, but now I see.**

**Through many dangers, toils, and
snares I have already come.
'Tis Grace hath brought me safe thus far
And Grace will lead me home.**

**'Twas Grace that taught my heart to fear,
And Grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that Grace appear
The hour I first believed.**

**When we've been there ten thousand
years, bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.**

AMEN!

You can finish here, or maybe you have other creative ideas that will work well for your setting: *you could decorate a cross with flowers or draw Easter messages with sidewalk chalk outside your home; you could spend time praying more specifically for the needs and opportunities of this global crisis; you could choose more songs of worship—you decide!*

Glory to God!