

APRIL

Rising to New Life - Resurrection all Around
Wendy Janzen

OVERVIEW

The date for Easter is set every year by the cycles of the natural world. Easter falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the Vernal (Spring) Equinox (March 21). It is a wondrous thing that our Christian celebration of resurrection mirrors and amplifies the more ancient recognitions of earth rising to new life again after winters' death (in the Northern Hemisphere, at least). This is a prime example of reading the "Book of Creation" along with scripture as revelation of God's redemptive activity in the world.

This service can be used for an Easter sunrise service, or for a sunrise service at any time in spring - every morning is like a mini resurrection as we rise from sleep to the aliveness of a new day.

Check the internet for the time of sunrise in your particular location. If you want to start in the predawn darkness to hear the birds sing their dawn chorus and witness the sunrise mid-service, you probably want to start about 30 minutes before the time of the sunrise.

Choose a location where you have a view of the eastern horizon. A hillside is nice, or overlooking water, to give a bit of a longer, expansive view of the rising sun.

See the [Introduction](#) to this series of worship services for further insights into planning an outdoor worship service.

GATHERING & GROUNDING

Arrange the group facing the east. Offer a land acknowledgement.

Invite people to breathe deeply. Take time to feel your body waking up to a new day. Observe the quality of the pre-dawn twilight. Perhaps stand and stretch to the sky and then bend and bow to touch the earth. Close your eyes and feel the temperature of the cool, lingering night air on your skin. Listen to the stillness around you, and to the birds welcoming the day.

Pray: Divine Presence, Midwife of Spring: awaken us to your presence within and around us this morning. Heighten our awareness to notice you with all our senses. May we open ourselves to the mystery and wonder of this new day and be reminded that each day is a day of resurrection. Amen.

READINGS & REFLECTIONS

John 12:23-24; John 20:1-18 (all or excerpts); Colossians 1:15-20

“Our Lord has written the story of resurrection not in books alone, but in every leaf of springtime.” - Martin Luther

“It is the earth that is both the subject and the object of salvation. We need to abandon a merely anthropocentric Christianity and open ourselves up to a more biocentric understanding of salvation. To Jesus’ humanistic perspective, we need to add an ecological perspective. This new way of doing things seems to me perfectly justified, because it maintains not only the most fundamental aspects of Jesus’ perspective but also the understanding that we are a living body in constant evolution.” – Ivone Gebara quoted in [*Ritual at World’s End: Essays on Eco-Liturgical Liberation Theology*](#), by Cláudio Carvalhaes

“One thing I appreciate about Easter is the way it is a continuation of the Incarnation celebrated at Christmas. Without incarnation there can be no resurrection. And without resurrection incarnation seems a little finite. Astonishing in its generosity, but finite.” - Christine Valters Payntner

Use any of these scripture suggestions or quotes to offer some food for thought - simple seeds to prompt participants to reflect on the expansiveness of God’s gift of salvation through resurrection and renewal. Don’t write a full sermon, as you want to leave space for the Spirit to speak through creation.

WANDERING & WONDERING

Invite participants to spend the next 20-30 minutes in silent, solo wandering and wondering. This is an opportunity for personal reflection. They may either stay in place to watch the sunrise, or go for a wander (contemplative walk to take note of what in nature may draw their attention). You may also offer questions like: What are ways God shows up in your life but you haven’t recognized it? Or where do you see stories of resurrection written into the world around you?

Give participants a specific time they are to return. Have some sort of bell, singing bowl, or chime to call them back.

SHARING

Depending on the size of your group, invite participants to share with a few people around them, or go around the circle with a talking stick. Invite them to share a few reflections about their experience during the wandering time.

SENDING BLESSING

If people are not already standing, invite them to stand and raise their arms as you offer this blessing.

May the risen Christ,
First-born of all creation,
bless you with the good news
that the dead season's done,
hope has sprung,
and new life is emerging
within and around us.

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