



Holy Humor Sunday
April 7, 2024 10:30 a.m.



(Image by Freepix)

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

Today we celebrate the ancient tradition of “Risus Paschalis,” which means the “Easter laugh.” For centuries, the days after Easter were observed by the faithful as “days of joy and laughter” with gatherings of storytelling, joke swapping, picnics and parties to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection. The custom was rooted in the writings of early church theologians, who explored the idea of Easter as “God’s Supreme Joke played on death.”

(from The Joyful Noiseletter, The Epistle of the Fellowship of Merry Christians, April 2005.)

"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full." John 15:11

RINGING THE BELL

WELCOME AND MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS

PRELUDE

"Voluntary in A"

William Selby

***CALL TO WORSHIP (2)**

One: Sing a new song!

All: A joyful melody of springtime glory and rebirth.

One: Sing praise to our Still-Laughing Easter God,

All: Who has rolled away the bindings of yesterday.

One: Immerse your anxiety and despair in the fountain of new birth.

All: We place our visions and hopes on the table of wine and wheat.

One: For God has taken ordinary things.

All: And made them extraordinary.

One: Sing a new song!

***GATHERING HYMN: “Sing a Happy Alleluia”** (tune: “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You”)

Words by Shirley Erena Murray © 1992 Hope Publishing Company

**Sing a happy alleluia, sing it out with heart and style—
we’re the echo of God’s laughter, we’re the image of God’s smile.**

***Refrain:* Alleluia, all creation, alleluia, everyone!
Alleluia, all creation, alleluia, everyone!**

**We’re the proof of God’s good humor, we’re the twinkle in God’s eye,
made to shine, reflect the glory, given light and space to fly. *Refrain***

**Sarah laughed at God’s good timing, Mary sang and David danced,
Jesus smiled and hugged the children—so is life for us enhanced. *Refrain***

Blessed Interruption

Alice Karcher, church comedian

One: Alleluia! Christ is risen! **All: Alleluia! We laugh with joy!**

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION (3)**

Forgive us, Lord, when we take ourselves too seriously,

when we don’t claim the happiness that is rightfully ours as your children,

when we forget that you will have the last laugh in this world.

Restore to us the joy of our salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. *(silent confession)*

***WORDS OF ASSURANCE (3)**

The Gospels tell us over and over again of the joy which comes to us through Christ.

With Jesus, lives were changed and the sorrowful began to laugh with joy.

The good news is that this joy is now given to us.

Thanks be to God!

***RESPONSE OF PRAISE “Sing a Happy Alleluia” v.4**

Every day sing alleluia! We are loved, though so absurd,

human, foolish, chosen people, God still takes us at our word! *Refrain*

*PASSING THE PEACE

CONVERSATION WITH OUR CHILDREN

CHORAL ANTHEM "Sing, Alleluia" Julie Knowles

Blessed Interruption

Danny Mees, church comedian

One: Alleluia! Christ is risen! All: Alleluia! We laugh with joy!

LISTENING

God speaks to us in the Word proclaimed.

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE READING John 20:19-31

Pew Bible p.883

A Word of God that is still speaking,
Thanks be to God!

SERMON

SILENT MEDITATION

In the middle of a long-winded sermon, a small child was overheard asking his mother in a whisper that was heard for a few pews around: "Mommy, are you sure this is the only way we can get into heaven?"

HYMN OF REFLECTION "Give to us Laughter" text by Walter Faruharson

Tune: "Be Thou My Vision"

**Give to us laughter, O Source of our life.
Laughter can banish so much of our strife!
Laughter and love give us wholeness and health.
Laughter and love are the coin of true wealth.**

**Give to us laughter as sign of deep joy;
let us in laughing find Christian employ,
joining with stars and with bright northern lights,
laughing and praising and sharing delights.**

**Even in sorrow and hours of grief,
laughter with tears brings us healing relief!
God, give us laughter, and God, give us peace,
joy of your promise among us increase.**

RESPONDING

We respond to God's Word through our prayers and our gifts.

Blessed Interruption

Lily Mulhall, church comedian

One: Alleluia! Christ is risen! **All: Alleluia! We laugh with joy!**

NAMING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

Blessed Interruption

Aubrey Mees, church comedian

One: Alleluia! Christ is risen! **All: Alleluia! We laugh with joy!**

OFFERTORY "Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us" William B. Bradbury;
Arr. David Paxton

(A QR code at the end of the bulletin is available for online giving.)

* RESPONSE OF PRAISE (tune: "Lasst Uns Erfreuen" *The Hymnal* #15)

Praise God, the Giver and the Gift,

Hearts, minds and voices now uplift, Alleluia! Alleluia!

Praise, praise the breath of glad surprise, Freeing, uplifting, opening eyes.

Three-In-Oneness, Love Communing, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

*COMMISSIONING HYMN: “ Hark! The Herald Angel Said”

Words by Paul Lintern (v. 1) & Jonathan Hauze (vv. 2-3)

**Hark! the Herald Angel said why seek Jesus with the dead?
He’s not here, as you can see, grave cloths lie where he would be.
On your way not tell the others, Jesus will be with his brothers.
Sisters, too, he wants to see the hills of Galilee.
Hark! the Herald Angel said He is risen from the dead.**

**Two disciples walking down to Emmaus with a frown:
Jesus walked and talked with them, hearts were low and eyes were dim.
To the stranger they both said: Stay with us, for night’s ahead.
Jesus blessed and broke the bread, and their hearts within them sped:
Now our eyes have seen the Lord! Now our hope has been restored!**

**When the doors were locked in fear, Christ the Lord again came near.
Peace be with you! twice he said, Now I send you in my stead.
Take the Spirit and forgive, Show the world that I do live.
Let my love cast out all fear, Trust that I am always near!
Witness to the Risen One, Share my peace with everyone!**

Blessed Interruption

Pastor Sarah, apprentice church comedian

One: Alleluia! Christ is risen! All: Alleluia! We laugh with joy!

*COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE "Prelude in Classic Style" Gordon Young

SENDING

With God’s blessing, we are sent forth to follow Christ in the world.

*One day after a worship service, a preacher announced:
“The class on prophecy has been canceled due to unforeseen circumstances.”*

Thanks to God, we at Hope United Church of Christ have good news to share. And we should feel compelled to share it, because there are people in St. Louis who are looking for a progressive and loving faith community. When we share Hope, we make it easier for them to find us!

Worship Endnotes

- (1) Adapted from Feasting on the Word: Liturgies for Year C, Volume 1; Kimberly Bracken Long, editor.
- (2) Adapted from www.thejoyfulnoiseletter.com, “Holy Humor Sunday” resources.
- (3) Adapted from www.re-worship.blogspot.com/2012/03/holy-humor-sunday

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Worship Leaders April 7, 2024

Pastor: Sarah McCann

Organist: Jim Threlkeld

Liturgist: Paul Conner

Ushers: Members of the Special Events Ministry Team

YouTube: Andy Karcher

Tech team: Jim Richmann, Jack Jennings, Ron Geisel,

Kristine Wentzien, Kathleen Mees

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