



Holy Humor Sunday
May 4, 2025 10:30 a.m.



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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.)

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***

*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

LISTENING

God speaks to us in the Word proclaimed.

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE READING Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Pew Bible pp.537-538

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

SERMON

Sarah Fredriksen McCann

The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending; and to have the two as close together as possible. -- George Burns

SILENT MEDITATION

HYMN OF REFLECTION “Give to us Laughter” *text by Walter Faruهارson*
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.

NAMING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

Blessed Interruption

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

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.

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

SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

INVITATION

COMMUNION PRAYER

God be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you...

...And so, with all your creatures—great and small—on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord, God of joy and creativity,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest!

Holy are you...

...And so as we remember, we proclaim together the mystery of our faith:

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

SHARING THE ELEMENTS

(All are welcome to share in the Sacrament of Communion! Elements will be served by ushers, and you are invited to hold the elements until we commune together. Wine trays contain white grape juice and red wine. A tray of gluten-free wafers is available from usher in center aisle.)

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (*unison*)

Resurrection God, your gracious laugh echoes through the world!

We have responded to your invitation to join in the Banquet.

Here we have eaten, we have drunk, we have tasted your goodness.

May the joy we find in this meal together lift up our hearts,

may we carry your laughter to the world around us, and share your love wherever we go.

Amen.

***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

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.

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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Hope United Church of Christ Statement of Welcome and Mission

No matter where you are on life's journey, you are invited to enter the big red doors of Hope United Church of Christ. We are an open congregation. We believe that every person is a child of God and all are welcome, regardless of race, economic background, marital status, gender, gender identity(ies) / expression(s), sexual orientation, age, physical or mental ability, nationality or faith history. It is our mission, inspired by God's Holy Spirit, to engage persons in living out the gospel of Jesus Christ. Please come, for all things are ready.

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Adopted by Hope UCC Congregation August 29, 2010