



PANTHER VALLEY ECUMENICAL CHURCH

Sunday April 19, 2020

*Connecting with the Community,
Growing Disciples, and Serving Jesus Christ*

*Our Worship can be viewed on our website
PantherValleyChurch.org*

FRIENDS ~ FAMILY ~ FAITH

PRELUDE *We invite you to begin your personal preparation at the beginning of the prelude.*

OPENING WORDS

Joy is loose, in the wiggles of the children, the whispers of the youth, and the smiles of the adults. We praise God for this glorious day. Let the praise break forth in the most unlikely places and in silly ways. May joy and praise fill our hearts. May our laughter be deep, for we are God's people.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Christ is risen indeed!

Though we find ourselves isolated in homes, apartments, and residential places, yet, we would listen to the birds singing, reminding us that the whole creation rejoices in the love of our God.

Though we cannot reach out and touch our friends and neighbors, we would rejoice that Jesus is in our midst, holding out hands of grace and hope to us!

Though we have to stand at a safe distance from others, whispering hello through masks, we know that the Spirit is all around us, breathing peace on us in these moments, surrounding us with grace and hope.

SCRIPTURE READING: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

GOSPEL READING: John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

MESSAGE *Practicing Holy Humor*

HYMN

Lord of the Dance

I danced in the morning when the world was begun
I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun
I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth
At Bethlehem I had my birth

Refrain

Dance, then, wherever you may be
I am the lord of the dance, said he
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be
And I lead you all in the dance, said he

I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee
But they would not dance, and they wouldn't follow me
I danced for the fishermen for James and John
They came to me and the dance went on

Refrain

I danced on the Sabbath when I cured the lame
The holy people said it was a shame
They whipped, they stripped and they hung me high
And they left me there on a cross to die

Refrain

Solo

I danced on a Friday and the sky turned black
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back
They buried my body and they thought I was gone
But I am the dance, and I still go on

They cut me down and I leapt up high
I am the life that'll never, never die
I'll live in you if you'll live in me
I am the Lord of the dance, said he

Refrain

PRAYER

God of Easter, though our lives seem so lonely and empty these days, yet there is the sun in the morning, the moon and stars at night, the wonder of creation unfolding before our eyes and hearts, reminding us that we have nothing apart from you.

We lift up to you those who are lonely and alone and those who have lost loved ones.

Brother of our souls, when we need to maintain boundaries and safe distancing, when we realize how much we miss human touch, you invite us to touch your loneliness with our own, your sorrow and scars with our own.

We lift up to you those who are providing healing, care, and comfort and those in need of your healing touch.

Spirit of hope, when we find ourselves huddling in the locked rooms of our hearts, the doors and shutters of our souls securing us from the fears that are outside, you come, to breathe peace upon us, to always surround us with hope, to never abandon us to our loneliness.

We lift up to you those who are fearful, despairing, and in need of peace.

God in Community, Holy in One, remind us we are never, ever, apart from you, even as we pray as we are taught,

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass 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

THE OFFERING

Easter teaches us that generous love is at the heart of God's work. Joyfully we are able to give knowing that our gifts will help others to see the blessed miracle of God's creative joy.

We offer several ways that you can give your fiscal pledge: by mail, through our website [Here](#), or add PVEC to your online bill pay. Thank you for your generosity.

CLOSING PRAYER

We know Jesus is present among us...
even in this very home...
We will not let fear be louder than love...
but with glad hearts and rejoicing souls...
we will sing God's praise...
for we are Easter People...!
So Let us ...
Dance an alleluia dance ...
Laugh with God ...
And let joy reside in our hearts always!
Amen!

Benediction
(based on Psalm 16)

As we close this time together, remember:
God is always with you. No matter what you face,
no matter what trials or hardships come your way,
God is right beside you, raising your very life from death,
guiding and directing your path.
So, acknowledge your fear and your worry
and know it is as true and holy as any feeling,
including joy and hope and love.
Take heart, my friends! This is the heart of the matter.
Let the people say, **Amen!**

POSTLUDE

"Spring Song"
by Lucille Clifton

*the green of Jesus
is breaking the ground
and the sweet
smell of delicious Jesus
is opening the house and
the dance of Jesus music
has hold of the air and
the world is turning
in the body of Jesus and
the future is possible*

Credits: Cover Image: Photo by Yogendra Singh from Pexels

Today's Liturgy is adapted from: Opening Words by Christine Aroney-Sine, Prayer by Thom Shuman,
Benediction by Marcia McFee,

Announcements & Upcoming Events

PVEC Shop & Drop If you are in a situation where you can not leave your house and you need food or medication contact our office and we will arrange for someone to shop and drop your items at your house.

Children's faith formation is found on our [website](#) and [facebook](#).

Bedtime Stories with Ms. Sarah & Mr. Dan are on Facebook live at 7:30pm

Bible Studies are being held on Zoom. Email or call the office if you are interested in joining these studies.

Unshakable Hope - Monday evenings beginning April 27th at 7pm via Zoom

Act: Catching Up with the Spirit - Wednesday Mornings at 10am via Zoom

Care and Nurture Prayer Shawls and Palm Prayer Squares are in the coat closet outside Fellowship Hall. People can take a bag to give to anyone who is in need of support and comfort.

PANTHER VALLEY ECUMENICAL CHURCH

1490 Route 517 Hackettstown, NJ 07840

~We were built for you!~

Panther Valley Ecumenical Church is a congregation of many Christian traditions who worship together in accordance with Christ's prayer: "that they may all be one."

Our multi-denominational church has been serving northwest New Jersey since 1969.

We are formally affiliated with: The Episcopal Church, The United Church of Christ, The Presbyterian Church USA, and The United Methodist Church.

May God's Blessing go with you this week.

Pastor: Ninabeth Metcalf

Music Director: Diane Van Dongen

Church Administrator: Cynthia Richards

Office hours: Mon. – Fri. 9:00am – 2:00pm

Website: <http://www.panthervalleychurch.org>

Tel: 908-852-5444 Fax: 908-850-4754

Email: officepvec@gmail.com

Friends • Family • Faith