



# PANTHER VALLEY ECUMENICAL CHURCH

**April 5, 2020  
Easter Sunday**

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

*Our Worship can be viewed on our website  
[PantherValleyChurch.org](http://PantherValleyChurch.org)*

*FRIENDS ~ FAMILY ~ FAITH*

## PRELUDE

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

## OPENING WORDS

*Sing to the LORD a new song,  
for he has done marvelous things;  
his right hand and his holy arm  
have worked salvation for him. Psalm 98:1*

We give thanks to you, Lord, for you have done marvelous things!

When we were walking in darkness  
you were there, you were there,  
when we were kneeling in weakness  
you were there, you were there,  
when we were feeling worthless  
you were there, you were there,  
when we were needing forgiveness  
you were there, you were there,  
when we were searching for your grace  
you were there, you were there.

We give thanks to you, Lord, for you have done marvelous things!

## SCRIPTURE READING: *Jeremiah 31: 1-6*

*At that time, declares the Lord, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they will be my people. The Lord proclaims: The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness. As Israel searched for a place of rest, the Lord appeared to them from a distance: I have loved you with a love that lasts forever. And so with unfailing love, I have drawn you to myself. Again, I will build you up, and you will be rebuilt, virgin Israel. Again, you will play your tambourines and dance with joy. Again, you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria; farmers will plant and then enjoy the harvests. The time will come when the watchmen shout from the highlands of Ephraim: "Get ready! We're going up to Zion to the Lord our God!"*

### **A Prayer**

God of new dawns, new awakenings, new life,  
we hear your voice this morning saying,  
"I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love.  
With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself."  
On this Easter day, you tell us we will be rebuilt and made new.  
In gratitude we hear you, Living God, and we believe you.  
And so we will celebrate the gift of new life in Christ,  
even in the midst of fear.  
You give us eyes to see through tears,  
songs to sing with throats tight with emotion.  
We know you help the weary rise up out of the ashes.  
Give us the courage to be your light and hope in this world today.  
**Amen.**

**GOSPEL READING:** Matthew 28:1-10

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

**MESSAGE**    *He Is Not Here***SPECIAL MUSIC**    *Christ the Lord is Risen Today***PRAYER for HEALING and WHOLENESS**

Jesus is no longer physically on earth, yet every time we gather around a table and we call him to mind, he is present with us in Spirit. And so too, our loved ones are with us. Let this be a comfort to us. We also want to call to mind, the people we cannot name, whose names we do not know. But we know they need our prayers and God's comfort.

For those who have lost loved ones  
For those who are sick and recovering  
For those who are caring for loved ones who are sick at home  
For those who are caring for persons in medical care  
For those who are separated from loved ones  
For those who are feeling alone and isolated  
For those who are helping and are so very tired  
For those who are struggling to find friends, food, and comfort  
For those who are afraid

I invite you to take a deep breath on behalf of all those we do not know and cannot call by name. As we do so, we know that *God* knows who needs our prayers and the Spirit, Breath of God, is blowing from within us outward as a Spirit of Compassion and Presence. Amen.

**THE OFFERING**

We invite you to take this time to express your gratitude to God for all that you have been given by dedicating your time, talents, witness, service, and resources. The gifts you give are helping God build the community of love in this place and in our world.

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.

**CALL TO RECONCILIATION**

Now, just as on that Easter morning long ago, we face choices: will we continue to live in fear, or step out in faith; will we trust in the One who is with us? Let us confess our lives, our emptiness, our worries to the One who calls us, feeds us, redeems us, as we pray together, saying,

## **PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS**

It has all disappeared, our God, our certainty of how life was to be, our daily activities and jobs and routines. It has all been snatched away from us, our lunches with friends, our family gatherings on porches and in backyards. It has all become so fearful, those simple things like going to a store, giving another a hug, attending a concert, a sporting event, or even a worship service.

Yet this feeling, this uncertainty, these fears are exactly what you experienced on that night so long ago, Brother of our hearts. All your certainty dissipated as easily as that crowd that cheered you just a few days before. Your hopes, your dreams, your desires for your friends had been snatched away by those powers and circumstances beyond your control. Even a simple, last meal with your closest friends was full of doubts, questions, recriminations, as you huddled isolated from the world.

So now, fill us with your presence, Spirit of that night and this morning. Fill us with that grace which enables us to look beyond our fears, to live as people of faith. Fill us with that love, which strengthens us to care for the most vulnerable around us, rather than the most powerful. Fill us with that hope, which is never quarantined, never isolated, never separated from us, in these and all the moments to come.

*Silence is kept*

## **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Here is the good news we need:

God is with us . . . God is with us . . . God is with us.

In remembrance, we are together, though scattered;

in remembrance, we share bread wherever we are;

in remembrance, we drink of the cup of grace, whoever we are;

in remembrance, we will trust, we will hope, we will live, we will follow. Amen.

## **THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

Friends, wherever you are may the Lord 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.**

The hour came, God of imagination, when chaos was no more, as you lifted the cup of creation, and poured it out: ...

... Therefore, with those we love so much, yet remain isolated from, we join our voices in saying your praise:

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,***

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,***

***Heaven and earth are full - full of your glory.***

***Hosanna in the highest.***

***Hosanna in the highest.***

***Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.***

***Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest.***

You are holiness beyond our understanding, God of love, and you have blessed us with the gift of Jesus. ...

... we pray that we would be filled with hope;  
as we gather around coffee tables or in kitchens, we would remember that faith is a mystery:

**Christ has died.  
Christ has risen.  
Christ will come again.**

Now pour out your Spirit on the gifts of the bread and the cup and on your children scattered in so many places. ...

...God of our hearts in every moment, Jesus of our hopes in every night, Spirit of our love in every person.

**Amen and amen.**

### **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**

And so I invite you to raise a plate of "something" on your table, or a glass of whatever you are drinking, and let us bless it in this way, repeating after me:

Holy Comforter  
We gather in your name...  
invited by Jesus...  
bound together with your Spirit...  
in union with each other...

Feed our bodies and our spirits...  
with your comforting presence...  
so that we might be your comfort to others...

Bless this food...  
and break open our hearts...  
Bless this drink...  
and pour out your love...  
Amen...

Let us close with this prayer that we will repeat every week of the Easter Season. Repeat

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...!

**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**

Credits:

Cover Image: Handmade card by MaryLou McGregor

Today's Liturgy is adapted from: Opening Prayer by John Birch, Prayer for Healing and Wholeness and Benediction written by Marcia McFee, Prayer for Reconciliation written by Thom Shuman.

**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

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

The Last Days of Jesus - Monday evenings at 7pm via Zoom

The Passion Play - Wednesday Mornings at 10am via Zoom

**Camp Johnsonburg Workdays** Throughout April - any hours or days you can volunteer will be appreciated. Carpentry, painting, and cleaning projects. Call or email Kathy Zinckgraf.

Our **PVEC Handbell Choir** offers us a unique musical and visual experience that speaks to our souls. Our Bells are 30+ years old and require a much needed refurbishing. Their value is \$16K, and we only have to find \$1,700 to make them like new. If you are interested in making a donation to this project, please speak to Faye Kennedy.

**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

~Welcome—we were built for you!~

Panther Valley Ecumenical Church is a multi-denominational church 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.

We are a congregation of many Christian traditions who worship together in accordance with Christ's prayer:  
"that they may all be one."

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

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**Friends • Family • Faith**