



Year B (2024) – Easter

## **RESURRECTION REALITY**

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### **SERIES EXPLANATION**

St. Paul writes, “Christ has *indeed* been raised from the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:20). Big word: *Indeed!* Paul is stressing that we must not think of Jesus’ resurrection like a happy ending to another epic fable. The resurrection is not legend. It really happened. Easter is not just a holiday. Easter is history. On time’s infinite line, Jesus’ resurrection is the punctiliar moment that defines reality for us all. If Christ remained dead, he is a fraud and failure. But *Christ has indeed been raised*. So, the reality: Jesus is exactly what he claimed to be—the Son of God, our Lord and Savior. If Christ remained dead, then the grave is the final, ugly, rotten end of us all. But *Christ has indeed been raised*. So, the reality is Jesus’ resurrection proves that “all will be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). The reality of the resurrection does not just change our future, but the way we look at life now.

The greatest theologian of the early church, Augustine, called the season of Easter “a joyful week of weeks”—seven wonderful weeks, each seven glorious days long. In this glorious season, let us meditate upon the breath-taking implications of the resurrection reality.

Our worship follows this pattern.

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Easter Dawn               | <i>Without the Resurrection Faith Is Futile</i>        |
| Easter Day                | <i>All Will Be Made Alive</i>                          |
| Second Sunday of Easter   | <i>The Living Lord Gives Proof and Peace</i>           |
| Third Sunday of Easter    | <i>We Have a Meaningful Message to Share</i>           |
| Fourth Sunday of Easter   | <i>The Risen Savior Provides Good Shepherd</i>         |
| Fifth Sunday of Easter    | <i>The Living Lord Produces Active Faith</i>           |
| Sixth Sunday of Easter    | <i>Jesus’ Business Is Love; Therefore, So Is Ours</i>  |
| Ascension of Our Lord     | <i>Christ’s Ascension Means He Is Closer Than Ever</i> |
| Seventh Sunday of Easter  | <i>We Will Overcome This Broken World</i>              |
| The Festival of Pentecost | <i>Christ Has Not Left Us Alone</i>                    |

### **RESOURCE REMINDER**

CW21’s *Altar Book* contains eight seasonal prayers of the church. These are spoken by the pastor, not responsive. *Service Builder* contains a wealth of additional prayers of the church. For the Easter season, there are prayers for Easter Sunday, Good Shepherd Sunday, and Ascension. Another responsive prayer is available for Mother’s Day, May 12. Two responsive prayers and a dialogue are available for Pentecost, which is grouped with the Easter season.

There are also dialogues for Easter and Ascension that may be used to begin the service. To find these, “Insert / Rite.” Then find the dialogues in the drop down at the top left under Seasonal Inserts.



**RESURRECTION REALITY**

**WITHOUT THE RESURRECTION  
FAITH IS FUTILE**

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**EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY**

It would not be productive to look for help in a cemetery. A corpse can do only one thing—rot. This is the source of the crushing sorrow Jesus' followers felt. He was the one in whom they had placed all their hope for a better reality. Now he was dead, so they thought. They were overwhelmed with sorrow, not just because they missed their friend. It now all seemed so pointless: the years and miles following Jesus, witnessing his miracles, listening to him. He was dead! And a corpse can only do one thing.

The resurrection changed everything. The disciples saw clearly that Jesus is who he said he was and did what he said he'd do. They realized their faith rested on a rock-solid foundation. Here is the resurrection reality. If Christ had not been raised, our faith in him would be futile. He could do nothing to help us. But Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

**READING INTRODUCTIONS** *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the lesson)*

Isaiah 25:6-9 – The prophet foresees the resurrection reality. The LORD would destroy the shroud of death and dry every tear from the faces of his people.

1 Corinthians 15:12-20 – St. Paul explains that if Christ has not been raised our faith is useless.

\*John 20:1-18 – The women and the disciples were crushed, because a dead savior is no savior at all. Christ's resurrection changed everything.

**HYMNS**

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Opening     | 470 Like the Golden Sun Ascending        |
| HOD         | 443 Awake, My Heart, with Gladness       |
| Third/Distr | 675 At the Lambs High Feast We Sing      |
| Closing     | 460 Alleluia, Alleluia, Hearts to Heaven |

**SERVICE OPTIONS**

This worship plan follows a common pattern in many congregations. The "Easter Dawn" service (where visitors are unlikely) includes Holy Communion. The later "Easter Day" service (hopefully full of many non-member guests) does not. In this pattern, members are encouraged to attend both services: dawn to receive the Lord's Supper; the latter to bring their unchurched acquaintances. Please adapt the plan to fit your local practices. If that pattern is used, the suggestion would be to use any setting of The Service for the sunrise service. (The Gloria will be sung for the first time in weeks.) One might consider metrical canticles, some of which share the tunes of Easter hymns.



**RESURRECTION REALITY**

**ALL WILL BE MADE ALIVE**

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**EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY**

The film director Woody Allen once said, “I’m not afraid to die, I just don’t want to be there when it happens.” Studies have shown that most people fear death to varying degrees. This fear is so common, there is even a field of psychological study called thanatology. It examines human reaction to death and dying. One of the biggest reasons people fear death is the perception of its permanency. In the normal realm of human existence, dead is dead. Someone dies, and all you have are pictures and memories. That is the way people typically think, but it is far from reality. Today, Christ proves to us that death is *not* final at all!

Easter teaches us that Christ is the first fruits of those who have died. Just as Christ rose, “so in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). That changes everything: the way we grieve the death of a Christian loved one, the way we feel when our health fails, the way we look at the purpose of life right now. Let us rejoice in this resurrection reality: All will be made alive!

**READING INTRODUCTIONS** *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the lesson)*

\*Job 19:23-27 – By faith Job knew that because the redeemer lives, even though Job would die and his body would decay, he would see his God with his own eyes in the resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:19-26 – Christ gives us hope in this life. But Christ’s resurrection gives us hope also for the eternal life that is to come.

Mark 16:1-8 – Early Easter morning, an angel explains to the women why they won’t find Jesus’ corpse in the tomb.

**HYMNS**

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Opening     | 438 Jesus Christ Is Risen Today              |
| HOD         | 440 Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands |
| Third/Distr | 441 I Know that My Redeemer Lives            |
| Closing     | 451 See, What a Morning                      |

**SERVICE OPTIONS**

*Service Builder* includes two Easter Dialogues which replace the confession of sins and Kyrie. The rubric suggests singing a doxological Easter hymn after. An excellent option is the first two verses of 471, “Now All the Vault of Heaven Resounds.”

Both 440 and 441 have many verses. Additionally, 440 and 451 may be somewhat new to some. Consider using a choir/small group to introduce some hymns and/or to take some of the verses on

longer hymns. Multiple choir arrangements are available for 440 and 441. Having the choir sing some verses alleviates any "need" to have a choral anthem, breaks up the singing of longer hymns for the congregation, and adds artistic variety to a hymn.



Second Sunday of Easter

April 7, 2024

**RESURRECTION REALITY**

## **THE LIVING LORD GIVES PROOF AND PEACE**

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### **EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY**

In most world religions, the alleged foundational event was experienced by only one person. A self-proclaimed prophet would allege he alone had some special encounter with God. *“No really! Just trust me. It really happened.”* The resurrection reality is so very different. In the Great Resurrection Chapter (1 Corinthians 15), St. Paul writes an entire paragraph listing all the people to whom Jesus appeared after he rose, including a group of over five hundred at one time. It is like St. Paul is telling skeptics, *“You don’t need to take my word for it. Hundreds of us saw Jesus back from the dead.”*

The proof of Jesus’ resurrection brought peace and strength to those early believers. They knew there was more to their existence than just their time on earth. They knew the reality that eternal life was theirs, a gift from their living Lord. It gave them incredible joy and courage. May the resurrection reality give us the same.

### **READING INTRODUCTIONS** *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the lesson)*

Acts 18:1-11 – The promised presence of the living Lord gave Paul the courage to keep on speaking the gospel, even when Paul was facing harsh persecution.

1 John 1:1-4 – St. John reminds us that there were witnesses who saw and touched Jesus raised from the dead. This resurrection serves as proof that eternal life is ours.

\*John 20:19-31 – The risen Savior offers proof and peace to his disciples.

### **HYMNS**

|             |                                       |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| Opening     | 449 This Joyful Eastertide            |
| HOD         | 456 O Sons and Daughters of the King  |
| Third/Distr | 830 We Walk By Faith                  |
| Closing     | 511 Crown Him with Many Crowns - v1-3 |

### **SERVICE OPTIONS**

If using *Service Builder*, consider inserting the Paschal Greeting (M: Christ is risen. ALL: He is risen indeed!) after the invocation in every service of the Easter season.

830 may be new. Consider having a cantor sing the first verse or two.

457 is a fine alternative to 456, with a familiar tune. However, it probably requires a brief verbal announcement where the presiding minister asks the congregation to note how the verses are sung in groups of three, followed by the refrain.



Third Sunday of Easter

April 14, 2024

**RESURRECTION REALITY**

## **WE HAVE A MEANINGFUL MESSAGE TO SHARE**

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### **EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY**

A platitude is a statement aimed at helping soothe some sort of emotional unease. *“What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.”* Or *“Life is a mystery.”* Or *“Good things come to those who wait.”* While platitudes may be well-intentioned, at best they come off as trite. And since platitudes provide no real help, they can actually make a situation worse. Tell the one whose heart is shattering, *“Life is a mystery.”* They won’t appreciate your platitude or you.

The resurrection gives believers the ability to offer more than platitudes. We have a meaningful message to share—of repentance, of forgiveness, of peace, of power. The reality is we have something important to say to every single person that God brings into our sphere of influence. And our risen Savior gives us the courage and power to share that meaningful message.

### **READING INTRODUCTIONS** *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the lesson)*

Acts 3:11-20 – Peter healed a crippled beggar, drawing a large crowd. Peter used that opportunity to share a meaningful message about the one the people of Jerusalem asked Pilate to crucify.

\*1 John 1:5–2:2 – St. John summarizes the meaningful message we have heard and been called to declare: God is light.

Luke 24:36-49 – The risen Savior gives us peace. He also gives us a mission. We are to share the message of repentance and forgiveness.

### **HYMNS**

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Opening     | 453 The Tomb Is Empty                      |
| HOD         | 459 Christ the Lord Is Risen Again         |
| Third/Distr | 713 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light |
| Closing     | 746 I Love to Tell the Story - v1,6,2      |

### **SERVICE OPTIONS**

713, a newer hymn, was sung on Transfiguration. This is used again intentionally.



Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 21, 2024

**RESURRECTION REALITY**

## **THE RISEN SAVIOR PROVIDES GOOD SHEPHERDING**

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### **EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY**

Scripture frequently pictures spiritual care in terms of a shepherd watching over sheep. Even folks unfamiliar with shepherding are able to grasp the meaning. Sheep are helpless animals—an easy meal for predators. For sheep to survive they needed a shepherd who not only leads them to sources of food, but who also is willing to tangle with a pack of wolves. Jesus is such a shepherd. He proved he is willing to lay down his life for his sheep.

The word “pastor” comes from the Latin word for “shepherd.” Today, there are plenty of people—pastors, religious leaders, etc.—who claim they can provide healing for your soul. Yet, Scripture warns that “many” of these are “false prophets” (1 John 4:1) who “distort the truth” (Acts 20:30). Many! But the resurrection reality is that our Good Shepherd is faithful. He will raise up true sub-shepherds who know Christ and proclaim the truth of his gospel.

### **READING INTRODUCTIONS** *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the lesson)*

Acts 20:28-32 – The good shepherd asks his sub-shepherds to keep watch over the flock.

\*1 John 4:1-6 – St. John encourages us to test all those who claim to have a spiritual message. Not all such individuals have been sent by God.

John 10:11-18 – Jesus explains why he is the good shepherd.

### **HYMNS**

|             |                                     |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| Opening     | 551 Jesus, Shepherd of the Sheep    |
| HOD         | 552 The King of Love My Shepherd Is |
| Third/Distr | 554 The Lord's My Shepherd          |
| Closing     | 804 I Am Jesus' Little Lamb         |

### **SERVICE OPTIONS**

554 is a newer hymn that paraphrases Psalm 23. If utilized, it will require a cantor to introduce. There are various options. The cantor could do verses 1 with the congregation joining on 2 and 3. The cantor could do all the verses, with the congregation joining only on the refrain. If Holy Communion is observed, perhaps consider either a) having a small group sing the entire hymn during distribution or b) switching to another hymn, one more familiar.



Fifth Sunday of Easter

April 28, 2024

**RESURRECTION REALITY**

**THE LIVING LORD PRODUCES ACTIVE FAITH**

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### EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

Generally, our actions are shaped by our beliefs. People who eat low-carb diets do so, probably not because they hate pasta, but because they believe it healthiest. If a man buys stock in a company, it probably is because he believes in their business plan. Our beliefs shape our behavior. This is true of Christians' belief in the resurrection. We believe that Christ's resurrection means our resurrection to a glorious eternal life is guaranteed. That inevitably shapes how we will act now.

However, it is not simply the facts of the resurrection that shape our behavior. It is the person of the resurrection. Jesus is not some wise, dead sage whose advice is contained in dusty books. Jesus lives! Therefore, through his Word, he is able to work on our minds and hearts, molding them to his perfect will. Here is a resurrection reality. Jesus fills us with his Spirit, not only so that we have faith, but also so that we produce the fruits of faith he seeks.

### READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the lesson)*

Acts 4:32-37 – In the early church, as the apostles preached the resurrection of Christ, the living Lord produced the fruits of unity and generosity.

1 John 3:18-24 – St. John encourages us to demonstrate living faith in loving words and actions.

\*John 15:1-8 – Jesus is the vine who gives us, his branches, the ability to produce fruits of faith.

### HYMNS

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Opening     | 709 Christ the Vine                     |
| HOD         | 469 Welcome, Happy Morning              |
| Third/Distr | 595 Fruitful Trees, the Spirit's Sowing |
| Closing     | 454 Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen - v1-3     |

### SERVICE OPTIONS

709 is not particularly difficult; however, it is new and would thus benefit being introduced by a cantor or small group. It was chosen as the opening hymn because it is directly based on the sermon text.

595 is also new, but it's a very familiar tune.

454 is also new, but it's a very familiar tune. Ending with verse 3 ties the theme of vine/branches up nicely.



**RESURRECTION REALITY**
**JESUS' BUSINESS IS LOVE;  
THEREFORE, SO IS OURS**
**EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY**

The entirety of God's Word can be summed up in one word: love. God's Law is all about love. *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart..."* and *"Love your neighbor as yourself"* (Matthew 22:37,39). The gospel is all about love: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son..."* (John 3:16). From his compassion for the sick and broken, to his sacrificial death on the cross, to the peace he provided after his resurrection, Jesus was the perfect embodiment of love. Love is his business.

Therefore, love is our business too. The resurrection reality is that with the same supernatural power by which God raised Jesus from the dead, God now enables us to live a new life—one marked by radically selfless love. The motivation and ability to do this comes from seeing the endless love Christ has for us. We love only because he first loved us.

**READING INTRODUCTIONS** *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the lesson)*

Acts 9:36-42 – Because Tabitha loved Jesus, she was always helping the poor in the town of Joppa. Because Jesus loved the people of Joppa, he had Peter raise Tabitha from the dead.

1 John 4:7-11,19-21 – Friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

\*John 15:9-17 – The living Lord gives us this command. Remain in his love so that we might also love each other.

**HYMNS**

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Opening     | 728 This Is My Will                       |
| HOD         | 557 Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice |
| Third/Distr | 523 How Deep the Father's Love for Us     |
| Closing     | 697 May We Your Precepts, Lord, Fulfill   |

**SERVICE OPTIONS**

557 is a Lutheran classic. It is extremely easy for newcomers to pick up and sing. It poetically shares the salvation story, i.e., that God's business is love! It is, however, quite long. Consider breaking up the verses by different groups, e.g., men, women, left side, right side. Or consider having a choir/small group sing select verses. There are countless arrangements.



Ascension of Our Lord

May 9, 2024

*RESURRECTION REALITY*

## **CHRIST'S ASCENSION MEANS HE IS CLOSER THAN EVER**

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### **EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY**

Conventional wisdom would say if Christ has ascended into heaven, he is further away from his followers than when he was visibly on earth. The resurrection reality is that it is the other way around. Now that Christ has ascended, he is closer than ever. The living and ascended Savior has reassumed full use of all his divine power. So if you need Christ's help, you don't need to hunt for him in Galilee. You call to him in prayer, wherever you are, whenever you want, and he hears and acts. You want to hear Jesus speak? You don't need to chase him down. Open his Word and listen to his powerful, life-giving voice.

The ascension marks the completion of Jesus' earthly mission, but it does not signify the end of his work. Christ ascended to exercise his limitless authority for the Church as we carry out our mission to be Christ's ambassadors of grace to the world. Therefore, the Festival of the Ascension is one of the oldest and most joyful celebrations in the Christian Church. It will be observed by Christians until Christ returns to take us to be with him.

### **READING INTRODUCTIONS** *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the lesson)*

Acts 1:1-11 – Before Jesus ascends, he promises to send his disciples the Holy Spirit so that he could continue to carry out his saving work through the Church.

\*Ephesians 4:7-16 – St. Paul explains the power and purpose of Christ's ascension. Jesus left this world for our good. He ascended so that he could give gifts to his people and build up his Church.

Luke 24:44-53 – The risen Savior ascended, and his disciples responded with joyful worship.

### **HYMNS**

|             |                                       |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| Opening     | 476 On Christ's Ascension I Now Build |
| HOD         | 472 A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing       |
| Third/Distr | 747 Christ High-Ascended              |
| Closing     | 474 Hail the Day That Sees Him Rise   |

*(continued)*

## SERVICE OPTIONS

*Service Builder* includes an opening dialogue for Ascension. It replaces the confession of sins and Kyrie. The rubric calls for it to be followed by a doxological hymn. The suggestion would be 511, versus 1 and 4, “Crown Him with Many Crowns.”

Ideally, the Festival of Ascension is observed on its proper day. However, in some congregations, a Thursday evening service is poorly attended and the message of Ascension therefore unheard. If the local practice is to move the observation of Ascension, the suggestion would be it replace the Seventh Sunday of Easter. This places the Festivals of Ascension and Pentecost back-to-back, bringing the Festival Half of the Church Year to an end. In this case, on Thursday, the pastor could send an email devotion to members about Ascension and encourage them to prepare for the celebration that weekend.



Seventh Sunday of Easter

May 12, 2024

**RESURRECTION REALITY**

**WE WILL OVERCOME THIS BROKEN WORLD**

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### **EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY**

This world is broken. Oh, certainly, we still see beauty in nature. By God's grace, we have plenty of happy moments. But that does not change the fact that this world does not function the way God designed it to. It is dangerous, especially for God's children. Jesus once promised that those who live for him will be hated (just as Christ was hated) by those who live for the world. The even greater danger: the priorities prompted by this broken world tempt the careless Christian to devalue that which truly matters. This world is very broken.

For that reason, our gracious, living Lord promises that one day soon enough, he will take us to a better world. More, he promises that until that time, his Father will protect us, preserving our faith through the truth of his Word. This is the resurrection reality. By God's grace, we will overcome this broken world.

### **READING INTRODUCTIONS** *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the lesson)*

\*Acts 6:1-9,7:2a, 51-60 – Simply for proclaiming Christ, the Sanhedrin wanted to kill Stephen. Christ used their murderous intent to enable Stephen to overcome this broken world.

1 John 5:1-6 – St. John explains that everyone born of God overcomes the world.

John 17:11b-19 – Jesus, our great high priest, prays that his Father would sanctify us with his truth and enable us to overcome the world.

### **HYMNS**

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Opening     | 717 What Is the World to Me                    |
| HOD         | 446 Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense              |
| Third/Distr | 892 By All Your Saints Still Striving - v1,7,3 |
| Closing     | 839 Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me                 |



Day of Pentecost

May 19, 2024

*RESURRECTION REALITY*

## **CHRIST HAS NOT LEFT US ALONE**

*The Festival of Pentecost*

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### **EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY**

Jesus told his disciples that, though he was going to ascend into heaven, he wasn't going to leave them alone. He was going to send "the Advocate," a title for the Holy Spirit. But Jesus wasn't sending the Spirit just to keep us company. Jesus would have the Advocate give us spiritual power so that we might participate in Christ's saving work. Here is the final resurrection reality. The Spirit gives us the ability to raise the spiritually dead to life.

We see this happen on Pentecost. The festival of Pentecost was held fifty days after the Passover. (Pentecost is Greek for "fifty.") It was a time to thank God for the harvest. But on that day, through the Church at work, the Holy Spirit gathered another harvest, a harvest of souls. Therefore, Pentecost is the third great festival of the Church, along with the Nativity and the Resurrection. With the Festival of Pentecost, the festival half of the Church Year comes to a close.

### **READING INTRODUCTIONS** *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the lesson)*

Ezekiel 37:1-14 – The Lord allows Ezekiel to see that the Spirit would give that prophet's words the power to raise the dead to life.

Acts 2:1-21 – The Day of Pentecost was the fulfillment of God's promise to pour out his Spirit.

\*John 15:26-27, 16:4b-11 – Jesus promised he would not leave us alone but would send us the Spirit of truth to give us the courage and power to testify to the world.

### **HYMNS**

|             |                                    |
|-------------|------------------------------------|
| Opening     | 479 God's Holy Spirit Came         |
| HOD         | 585 Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord |
| Third/Distr | 593 Holy Spirit, Light Divine      |
| Closing     | 592 Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling     |

### **SERVICE OPTIONS**

*Service Builder* includes an opening dialogue for Pentecost which replaces the confession of sins and Kyrie. The rubric calls for it to be followed by a doxological hymn. The suggestion would be 962, verses 1 and 5, "Hail Thee, Festival Day" (Pentecost Version) OR 590, verses 1 and 2, "O Holy Spirit, Enter In."