

I've got GOOD NEWS*

*or bad news, depending

- Matthew 28:1-10

Easter Sunday, with the *Blooming of the Cross*
Sunday, 4/5 @ 10am, on-site & online via Zoom
Connect at www.NeedhamUCC.org



The Congregational Church of Needham, *United Church of Christ*

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Rev. John Gage, *senior minister*
Valerie Becker, *director of music*
Darlene Wong, *director for children & youth*
Robin Bevilacqua, *church operations manager*
Cindy Sullivan, *financial administrator*
Tom Mollerus, *moderator*
Pastor-Parish Relations Committee

revjohn@needhamucc.org
musicdirector@needhamucc.org
childrenandyouth@needhamucc.org
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finance@needhamucc.org
moderator@needhamucc.org
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Welcome! *No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are invited and welcome here at The Congregational Church of Needham, United Church of Christ.*

Please take a moment to let us know you're here, whether you are an official church member, a frequent guest, or a first-timer. **Scan this QR code with the camera on your phone and follow the link to sign-in.** *There's a paper sign-in sheet in the foyer, if you prefer.*

Our Church Covenant *At the Congregational Church of Needham, United Church of Christ, we strive to be a joyful, welcoming Christian Community. We seek to be faithful in a world torn by suffering, injustice, oppression, and war. We are inspired by God, Christ's Ministry, and the examples of other faithful people. We join together in worship and song, fellowship, study, and mission to embrace the risks and challenges of continuing Christ's ministry. We struggle to live out our faith in the world by furthering justice and peace, witnessing to the truth, and proclaiming God's love and mercy for all people.*

Our Open and Affirming Covenant *We believe that all people are created in the image of God, who loves each of us as we are. Following the example of Jesus, we welcome and affirm all people, including those of every age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression; every racial, ethnic and cultural identity, and country of origin; every faith background, family configuration and economic situation; every mental and physical ability and health status; every life experience and circumstance. We strive to be an example of God's extravagant welcome and to live these beliefs in our worship, language, actions and relationships. We invite all people who desire to join us in this journey of faith to share in the full life and ministry of this church.*

If you are a guest with us today, a special welcome to you! We'd love to know that you're here. Please sign in using the QR code at the top of this page or the physical attendance sheet in the narthex/foyer. If you'd like to learn more about our church or what it means to be a member here, please reach out to Rev. John at revjohn@needhamucc.org.

Children of all ages are always welcome in worship! Quiet books and pew pals (soft toys) are available in the narthex/foyer just outside the sanctuary doors. All accessible bathrooms have **changing tables**.

WIFI in the sanctuary: UCC_Guest, password: needhamucc

FOR TODAY:

There is no Sunday school today. Kids are invited to remain in worship with their families and particularly to help with the Blooming of the Cross. There are special pew activity bags available in the lobby. Ask a greeter for help locating one.

*The flowers on the altar today are given to the glory of God and in loving memory of
Meta Hopkins by her family.*

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

El Señor Resucito

A - le - lu - ya! A - le - lu - ya! A - le - lu - ya! A - le - lu - ya!
 Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!

lu - ya! A - le - lu - ya! A - le - lu - ya! El Señ or re - su - ci to!
 lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Yes, the Lord is ris'n in - deed!

SERMON

I've Got Good News *or Bad News, Depending*

Rev. John MacIver Gage

SHARING OUR EASTER FAITH

Rev. Dr. Mary Luti, for ReformedWorship.org

- One: Let us declare our Easter faith together: We believe in the God of Life,
- Many: whose breath is in us and whose mercy encircles the creation.**
- One: We believe in Jesus Christ,
- Many: who loved us indestructibly and who shared our pain. He is with us now as he promised, even to the end of the age.**
- One: We believe in the Holy Spirit,
- Many: who welcomes us into the household of faith, gives us gifts in abundance, enlivens our hearts with joy, and urges us into the world to testify without fear to God's justice and grace.**
- One: Hoping against hope for the promised realm of peace,
- Many: we love one another while we live, we honor every creature God has made, we stand against the powers of sin and death, and we bless the earth and all that fills it.**
- All: Glory, thanks, and praise be yours, O Living God, now and forever! Amen. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

HYMN

Christ Has Risen While Earth Slumbers (see below)

SHARING OUR PRAYERS ("O God, hear our prayer")

THE LORD'S PRAYER *(using these or whichever words are closest to your own heart)*

Our Father/Mother in heaven, holy is your name. Your reign come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kin-dom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

ANTHEM

This Joyful Eastertide, arr. M. Archer

Chancel Choir

This joyful Eastertide, Away with sin and sorrow! My Love the crucified, hath sprung to life this morrow.
Had Christ, that once was slain, Ne'er burst his three-day prison, our faith had been in vain;
But now hath Christ arisen, arisen, arisen, arisen.

My flesh in hope shall rest, and for a season slumber: Till God from East to West, Shall wake the dead in number
Had Christ, that once was slain, Ne'er burst his three-day prison, our faith had been in vain;
But now hath Christ arisen, arisen, arisen, arisen.

Death's flood hath lost its chill, Since Jesus crossed the river; over of souls from ill, my passing soul deliver.
Had Christ, that once was slain, Ne'er burst his three-day prison, our faith had been in vain;
But now hath Christ arisen, arisen, arisen, arisen.

INVITATION TO DEEPER RELATIONSHIP

Feeling like you might like to make this congregation your church home? Curious to learn more about who we are and how we practice our faith and what membership means here? Reach out to Rev. John at revjohn@needhamucc.org

PARTNERING IN THE GOOD NEWS

SINGING OUR THANKS & PRAISE

**O Morning of our hearts, we sing;/ our endless Alleluias ring!
Amid the shadows of our gloom / new hope, new life, an empty tomb!**

WE ARE BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

POSTLUDE



Help Us Nurture Faith with the Youngest Among Us

Every Sunday we need two non-related adults—a teacher and an assistant—to staff our Sunday School classroom. Ms. Darlene Wong, our Director for Children & Youth, is our teacher. Will you be the assistant? No experience is needed. Please [sign up here](#) to help.

Questions about our Children & Youth Ministries? Email Darlene Wong at childrenandyouth@needhamucc.org

OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED: April 5, 2026



"Holy Humor" Sunday

Laughing in the Face of Death

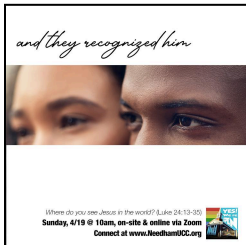
4/12 @ 10am, LIVE! on-site & online via Zoom at <http://zoom.us/j/907548568>

Something called "Holy Humor" Sunday sounds like a modern invention, but actually it's a practice with deep roots in the church, particularly in the Eastern Churches. In those traditions, the sin-shattering, world-changing joy of Easter is extended to the Sunday after Easter Sunday with a celebration called "Bright Sunday" or "Holy Humor" Sunday. It's a way of understanding Christ's Easter resurrection as God's own practical joke on the powers that be, when the world goes

knock-knocking on the tomb door only to find that Jesus is not home but has risen to break the bonds of sin and death. It's a reminder that joy and laughter really can bring down mighty empires.



To help us get into the spirit, WE NEED YOUR (CHURCH-APPROPRIATE) JOKES—AND WE NEED YOU TO TELL THEM! Think dad- (or mom- or uncle- or aunt-) jokes, the groanier the better. We especially encourage kids to bring us their best jokes! Email revjohn@needhamucc.org with your willingness to help. And just to top everything off—literally—we'll have lots and lots and lots of these *cascarones*, traditional Mexican confetti eggs.



And They Recognized Him

4/19 @ 10am, LIVE! on-site & online via Zoom at <http://zoom.us/j/907548568>

We're reminded that Jesus' Easter resurrection isn't the end of a story but the beginning of a whole new story. The Spirit of Christ is freed to show up whenever and wherever and to whomever God directs. The disciples attempting to flee Jerusalem and their own grief at Jesus' death along the road to Emmaus are surprised to recognize him in the ordinary act of breaking bread. How do we recognize Jesus in our everyday lives today? Are we even looking? (Luke 24:13-35)



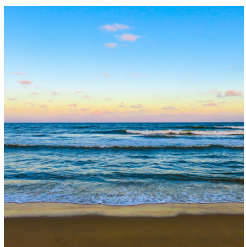
An All-Ages, Hands-On SermonCraft for Earth Sunday

Gorilla Gardening

4/26 @ 10am, LIVE! on-site & online via Zoom at <http://zoom.us/j/907548568>

On this Earth Sunday, when we celebrate the goodness of creation and our call to work for climate care and climate justice, members of our Environmental Ministries Team will lead an environmentally-themed worship service they've helped create and everyone, young and old, will get our hands dirty, literally, making "seed balls"—balls of clay, soil, and the seeds of native flowering plants—to take out into the world to do some "guerilla gardening" (get it?) in vacant lots,

forest trails, and even our own backyards. Go forth and grow forth, people of God!



Annual Women's Retreat

Open all women—cisgender & transgender—as well as nonbinary people who feel aligned with a women-centered space

Friday & Saturday, 5/8-9

We would love to have you join our wonderful community of women for an overnight stay and three meals at the Craigville Retreat Center in Centerville on Cape Cod. The theme this year is "What Matters." The space can hold up to 23 people in a dorm-like setting and the cost per person

is \$160. Events include meals together, beach walks, yoga, music, group discussions, a craft, a communion service and overall camaraderie. To join us, please mail or drop off a check made out to the Congregational Church of Needham, with "Women's Retreat" in the memo section, as well as a note listing your email address, phone number, and any food allergies or dietary restrictions you may have. Since space is limited, reserve your spot now. Two weeks before the program you will get an email with more specifics. Questions? Feel free to reach out to Stephanie Oddleifson, a member of the planning team, at soddleifson@gmail.com.



Baby Basics Groceries Ongoing Food Collection

Each Sunday we collect specific proteins for the groceries we give to the families accessing diapers through Baby Basics every other month. We're looking for large jars of natural (no sugar added) **peanut butter**; small cans of **tuna in water**; large cans of **chicken**; and bags of **dried beans**.

Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain

1. Come, you faith - ful, raise the strain of tri - um - phant glad - ness;
2. 'Tis the spring of souls to - day; Christ has burst his pris - on,
3. Now the joy - ous sea - son, bright with the day of splen - dor,
4. Nei - ther might the gates of death, nor the tomb's dark por - tal,

God has brought forth Is - ra - el in - to joy from sad - ness;
and from three days' sleep in death as a sun has ris - en;
with the roy - al feast of feasts, comes its joys to ren - der;
nor the watch - ers, nor the seal hold him as a mor - tal;

loosed from Pha - raoh's bit - ter yoke Ja - cob's sons and daugh - ters;
all the win - ter of our sins, long and dark, is fly - ing
comes to glad Je - ru - sa - lem who with true af - fec - tion
but to - day a - mid the twelve Christ now stands, be - stow ing

led them with un - moist - ened foot through the Red Sea wa - ters.
from the Light, to whom we give laud and praise un - dy - ing.
wel - comes in un - wear - ied strains Je - sus' res - ur - rec - tion.
peace and joy which ev - er - more pass all hu - man know - ing.

Christ Has Risen While Earth Slumbers

Christ has ris-en while earth slum - bers; Christ has ris - en where hope died,
Christ has ris-en for the peo - ple whom he died to love and save;
Christ has ris-en and for ev - er lives to chal-lenge and to change

as he said and as he prom - ised, as we doubt-ed and de - nied.
Christ has ris - en for the wo - men bring-ing flow-ers to his grave.
all whose lives are messed or mang - led, all who find re li-gion strange.

Let the moon em - brace the bles-sing! let the sun sus - tain the cheer;
Christ has ris - en for dis - ci - ples hud-dled in an up - stairs room.
Christ is ris - en, Christ is pre-sent ma - king us what he has been:

let the world com - firm the ru - mor: Christ is ris - en, God is here!
Hewhose word in - spired cre - a - tion can't be si - lenced by the tomb.
ev - i - dence of trans - for - ma - tion in which God is knownand seen.