

LARGE PRINT

**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](http://www.NeedhamUCC.org)**



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

1154 Great Plain Ave, Needham MA 02492 / Tel 781.444.2510 / [www.NeedhamUCC.org](http://www.NeedhamUCC.org) / IG @NeedhamUCC

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](mailto:revjohn@needhamucc.org)  
[musicdirector@needhamucc.org](mailto:musicdirector@needhamucc.org)  
[childrenandyouth@needhamucc.org](mailto:childrenandyouth@needhamucc.org)  
[office@needhamucc.org](mailto:office@needhamucc.org)  
[finance@needhamucc.org](mailto:finance@needhamucc.org)  
[moderator@needhamucc.org](mailto:moderator@needhamucc.org)  
[prc@needhamucc.org](mailto:prc@needhamucc.org)



**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](mailto: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.*

## April 5, 2026: Easter Sunday

What keeps us from sleeping/ is that they have threatened us with Resurrection!/ Because every evening/ though weary of killings,/ an endless inventory since 1954,/ yet we go on loving life and do not accept their death!/. . . Join us in this vigil/ and you will know what it is to dream!/ Then you will know how marvelous it is/ to live threatened with Resurrection!/ To dream awake,/ to keep watch asleep,/ to live while dying,/ and to know ourselves already/ resurrected!

– from “They Have Threatened Us with Resurrection” (1980) by Julia Esquivel, Guatemalan poet, theologian, and activist

### **PRELUDE**

*Jesus Christ is Risen Today, Alleluia!*, arr. H. William Valerie Becker, organ

### **WELCOME**

Rev. John MacIver Gage

### **SHARING THE STORY**

Matthew 28:1-10 (NRSVUE)

**One:** After the Sabbath was over, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

**Many:** **And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descending from heaven came and rolled back the stone covering the mouth of the tomb and sat on it.**

**One:** Their appearance was like lightning and their clothing white as snow. For fear of them, the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women:

**Many:** **“Do not be afraid, for 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.’”**

One: 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:

Many: **“Do not be afraid; go and tell my friends and siblings to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”**

## ESPECIALLY FOR CHILDREN

*The youngest among us are invited to come forward to share a time especially for them; after, they may return to their families in the pews.*

## BLOOMING THE CROSS

*As the music plays, all may come forward with your flowers (and those provided) to “bloom” the cross as a sign of Easter resurrection.*


**HYMN**     *Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain* (see below)

## GREETING ONE ANOTHER IN PEACE

(“Peace be with you / **And also with you**”)

## PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

*El Señor Resucito*



A - le - lu - ya! A - le - lu - ya! A - le - lu - ya! A - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! 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. *REFRAIN*

Death's flood hath lost its chill, Since Jesus crossed the river;  
lover of souls from ill, my passing soul deliver. *REFRAIN*

## 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](mailto: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](mailto:childrenandyouth@needhamucc.org)**

## OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED: April 5, 2026



### “Holy Humor” Sunday

#### Laughing in the Face of Death

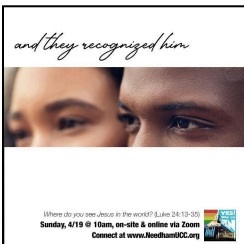
4/12 @ 10am, LIVE! on-site & online via Zoom at <http://zoom.us/j/907548568>

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](mailto: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)



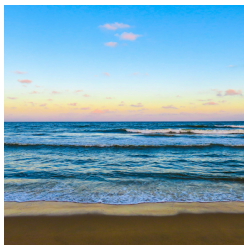
*An All-Ages, Hands-On SermonCraft for Earth Sunday*

## **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](mailto: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**

Come, you faithful, raise the strain of triumphant gladness;  
God has brought forth Israel into joy from sadness;  
loosed from Pharaoh's bitter yoke Jacob's sons and daughters;  
led them with unmoistened foot through the Red Sea waters.

'Tis the spring of souls today; Christ has burst his prison,  
and from three days' sleep in death as a sun has risen;  
all the winter of our sins, long and dark, is flying  
from the Light, to whom we give laud and praise undying.

Now the joyous season, bright with the day of splendor,  
with the royal feast of feasts, comes its joys to render;  
comes to glad Jerusalem who with true affection  
welcomes in unwearied strains Jesus' resurrection.

Neither might the gates of death, nor the tomb's dark portal,  
nor the watchers, nor the seal hold him as a mortal;  
but today amid the twelve Christ now stands,  
bestowing peace and joy which evermore pass all human knowing.

Text: St. John of Damascus (8th C); trans. J.M. Neale (1859)

Tune: ST. KEVIN (Sullivan)

## Christ Has Risen While Earth Slumbers

Christ has risen while earth slumbers;  
Christ has risen where hope died,  
as he said and as he promised,  
as we doubted and denied.  
Let the moon embrace the blessing  
let the sun sustain the cheer;  
let the world confirm the rumor:  
Christ is risen, God is here.

Christ has risen for the people  
whom he died to love and save;  
Christ has risen for the women  
bringing flowers to his grave.  
Christ has risen for disciples  
huddled in an upstairs room.  
He whose word inspired creation  
can't be silenced by the tomb.

Christ has risen and for ever  
lives to challenge and to change  
all whose lives are messed or mangled,  
all who find religion strange.  
Christ is risen, Christ is present  
making us what he has been:  
evidence of transformation  
in which God is known and seen.