

APRIL 12, 2026 ORDER OF WORSHIP

I. PRELUDE: Robin Wohlfeil

Robin's Choice

II. WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS & OPENING PRAYER: Ed Marek

A. Welcome

Ed welcomes everyone to worship and introduces himself as the guest preacher.

B. Announcements

Ed draws everyone's attention to the announcements insert in the bulletin and opens the floor for any important verbal announcements.

C. Opening Prayer

Let us pray: Lord, may we receive strength for every challenge we may face. When we feel tired, lift us up. When we feel discouraged, remind us of Your promises. Let no situation overwhelm us. Give us the grace to stand firm and not give up. Strengthen our spirit, our mind, and our body. Help us to face each day with courage, knowing that You are with us. Amen.

III. CALL TO WORSHIP: TBD

One: Please rise in body or in spirit and join in call to worship as it appears in your bulletin:

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

All: Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

One: We have not seen the risen Christ,

All: But we see him in the lives of those transformed by grace.

One: We have not seen Jesus face-to-face,

All: But we have seen him in the faces of everyone whose love encourages us.

One: We have not touched the wounds from the cross,

All: But we have been called to bring healing to the scarred of the world.

One: Let us worship together, beginning by singing hymn #231- Christ Has Risen While Earth Slumbers

IV. OPENING SONG: Robin

#231- Christ Has Risen While Earth Slumbers

V. CONFESSION & ASSURANCE: TBD

A. Call to Confession

Please be seated. Friends, God tells us I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, ‘You are my servant’; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Please join me in the prayer of confession as it appears in your bulletin:

B. Prayer of Confession

One: Lord God, you made the hearts of the disciples glad with the knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus, your Son. Forgive us because, like them, we find the truth of Easter so hard to believe. Because we are so easily downcast, and given to despair,

All: Forgive us.

One: Because, although we claim to live by the resurrection faith, we often believe that suffering is simply a tragedy and that death is the end,

All: Forgive us.

One: Because we take so much convincing to see the hope that you give to the world.

All: Forgive us. Come to us in the power of the risen Christ. Take away our crippling doubts and fears, and through your Holy Spirit bring us to life in your service; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

C. Assurance of Pardon

One: Our God who knows us and calls out to us when we falter or misstep, is the same God who embraces us, reminds us of our belovedness, and forgives us our sins. Friends, believe the good news of the gospel!

All: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

VI. PASSING OF THE PEACE: TBD

One: The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

All: And also with you.

One: Now, let us share a sign of God's peace with one another.

VII. SONG OF PRAISE: Robin

#243- Be Not Afraid

VIII. FIRST SCRIPTURE READING: TBD

A. Prayer for Illumination

Please be seated. Now, as we prepare to hear a fresh word from God, let us pray together: "Lord Jesus Christ, you are our peace in the storm and our hope in every trial. We ask that the power of your resurrection fill our hearts today. Breathe upon us your spirit of life in times of chaos, calm our anxiety, and lift us from fear, shame, or regret. As you rose to new life, help us to rise into a life of peace and bold faith. Amen.

B. Scripture Reading

Our first scripture reading is Psalm 16. Hear God's Word spoken for you:

¹Keep me safe, my God,

for in you I take refuge.

²I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;

apart from you I have no good thing."

³I say of the holy people who are in the land,

"They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight."

⁴Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more.

I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods

or take up their names on my lips.

⁵Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup;

you make my lot secure.

⁶The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;

surely I have a delightful inheritance.

⁷I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;

even at night my heart instructs me.

⁸ I keep my eyes always on the Lord.

With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;

my body also will rest secure,

¹⁰ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,

nor will you let your faithful one see decay.

¹¹ You make known to me the path of life;

you will fill me with joy in your presence,

with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

One: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

IX. SPECIAL MUSIC: Robin

Robin's Choice

X. SECOND SCRIPTURE READING: Ed

Our second scripture reading comes from the gospel of John, chapter 20 and verses 19 through

31. Hear God's Word spoken for you:

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.

One: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

XI. MESSAGE: Ed

From today’s scripture reading it would be so easy if we only focused on Thomas or as we have all heard him referred to as “Doubting Thomas.” There is so much more to this scripture. Earlier in John 20 we hear about Mary Magdalene arriving at the tomb of Jesus only to see the stone that was placed at the opening had been moved. Mary ran to the disciples, let Simon Peter and one other disciple know of this. I would not be surprised if one of the first things that ran through their mind was is it true what they were told, after all how could this have happened. Both men ran back to the tomb only to see for themselves that indeed the stone was moved, and

Jesus was not inside, all that was there were strips of linen that wrapped Christ's body. At that point in seeing the linen was it at that moment they now realized that as Christ had spoken, he would return to them. I am not saying that Simon Peter and the other disciple did not believe it, it is that what they were told by Mary Magdalene was so profound, astonishing, even bold that it may have caused them not to know how to process what they had heard.

I am certain all of us have had a moment in our lives when you experienced or heard of something that could be called profound, astonishing, or even bold that you may have thought "that can't be true." What about times when there was something that you saw in person and you asked yourself, did that really happen? Similarly, when you actually heard something have you ask yourself "did I just hear that right." We have all had this experience at some point in our lifetime. If we have questioned ourselves, should we then be called "doubting, then enter our own name here?" Maybe for a moment but not for all eternity. Now instead of labeling Thomas as doubting, we could think of a better way to say this, that he may have just needed proof of what Christ had spoken of. After all, only three days earlier Jesus was betrayed and arrested, he was crucified and died on the cross. Think of the fear and confusion they were all going through, trying to make sense of what happened and the thought racing through their minds if they may be next.

What if it were a different disciple that did not see Jesus on that day, would they have responded any differently than Thomas did. What about us, how would we have reacted? Would it have been any different than what Thomas felt and expressed to the other disciples when he was told of what they saw and heard.

Here is where it gets difficult to figure out if Thomas was someone who doubted, or did he actually not believe that Jesus appeared before the other disciples. We have all heard him referred

to as doubting Thomas yet in the scripture reading today, he states “I will not believe until I see the marks made by the nails in His hands. I will not believe until I put my finger into the marks of the nails. I will not believe until I put my hand into His side.” The act of doubt does not mean disbelief, doubting means we can question a perceived truth, a seeking of understanding, even a thoughtful process that can lead to deeper faith. On the other hand, to say he did not believe what he had been told, considering his close knowledge of Jesus yet we clearly hear him say that he will not believe any of this unless he can confirm this by seeing the nail marks, by placing his finger in them and by placing his hand into Jesus’s side. So, is he doubting or is he a disbeliever? Because disbelief is deliberate refusal to accept something as true. I see this as a fine line between the two. To disbelieve there needs to be at the start some doubt about the situation. If he did say he needed to see Jesus and to touch his wounds in order to believe, was it only meant to convey his doubt. It is clear that he missed out seeing Jesus when everyone else saw him.” Is seeing really the only way to believe? What he asked was to confirm what he believed, that Jesus would return.

And the beauty of it all, a week later, the disciples are together again, and this time Thomas is with them. The doors are still locked yet Jesus shows up again. And He does not skip Thomas. He does not say, “Too bad you missed it.” He goes straight to him and says, “Put your finger into My hands. Put your hand into My side. Do not doubt, believe.”

Jesus meets Thomas right in his doubt. He does not shame him or lecture him. He offers His hands, His side, Himself. And Thomas’ reaction is not only does he believe—he worships. “My Lord and my God!” he says. It is the highest confession of faith in John’s Gospel, and it comes from the guy who doubted the hardest. Isn’t that something? Doubt does not disqualify you from faith, it can be the doorway to it, if you let Jesus meet you there.

Finally, Jesus says something that pulls us right into the story. In verse 29: Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you believe. Those are happy who have never seen Me and yet believe!” That is us, we were not in that room. We have not seen the wounds; we have not touched the wounds. But we are not left out. Jesus is speaking across time, calling to us, blessing us, those who believe without seeing, that’s all of us.

How do we do that? John gives us a hint in verse 31: But these are written so you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. When you put your trust in Him, you will have life that lasts forever through His name. The story, the wounds, the peace, the doubt, the faith, it is all written down so we can know Him.

We have all heard the saying “The proof is in the pudding.” Actually, this saying is an edit of an older one from the 1600s: “The proof of the pudding is in the eating.” When we use it, we mean that we want to see the value, quality, or truth of something that must be judged based on direct experience something for ourselves rather than just trust the words of someone else. Thomas applied this test to Jesus’s resurrected body, but what if we turned it around and applied it to our own faith? Our faith is proven by what we believe and trust, yet sometimes in spite of our circumstances, or even by what we see and hear, we believe.

So where are you today? Are you locked in a room of fear, needing Jesus to bring peace? Are you sent out, feeling the breath of His Spirit but unsure where to step? Are you Thomas, wrestling with questions, waiting for a sign? Wherever you are, Jesus comes to you. He shows you His hands, not to prove a point, but to prove His love. He breathes His Spirit, not to push you, but to empower you. And He calls you blessed, not because you have it all figured out, but because you are His.

Thomas shared his doubt with the disciples not because he did not believe in Jesus, he spoke those words so we don't have to. Jesus died for our sins, he rose for our salvation, and Thomas doubted so our belief can be even stronger. We do not see with our eyes, but we see with our hearts, through the witness of Scripture, the breath of the Holy Spirit, and the love of this community we can believe.

There is a movie by the name of Bruce Almighty; it is a comedy movie from 2003, and actor Morgan Freeman played the role of God. In this movie there is a scene where Morgan Freeman is talking with someone in a diner, and what he says here I found interesting. He says, "If someone prays for patience, you think God gives them patience? Or does he give them the opportunity to be patient? If they prayed for courage, does God give them courage, or does he give them opportunities to be courageous? If someone prayed for the family to be closer, do you think God gives them warm fuzzy feelings, or does he give them opportunities to love each other?"

For Thomas it was an opportunity missed, he was somewhere else and did not see Jesus when he returned. He wanted to see Christ once again, to share in the comfort of his word and to be in the warmth of his grace. He looked up to Jesus, his teacher and master, and he did not know if the opportunity would return.

Do we need a special opportunity in our lives to believe in God, to believe that Jesus died for our sins and rose for our salvation? That special opportunity is already in front of us. We have the printed word of God in the bible and our hearts are open to believe. Every day when we go outside, we see the wonder of his creation. We look at family and friends and feel joy. Yes, some opportunities are missed, we look left when we should have looked right. Or sometimes, at a given moment we do not know what to say to someone and after time we realize we missed out.

Mostly the only one who will know is you. God does not shut the door on us if we miss one. We may not realize it right away, but have you ever had the feeling that you might have had more than one opportunity in any given circumstance?

On the first time Jesus appeared to the disciples he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you say that people are free of sins, they are free of them. If you say that people are not free of sins, they still have them.” To be free from sin means that those who have given their lives to Christ are no longer enslaved by sin. We have the power, through the Holy Spirit, to live victoriously over sin. Sin is out there, no denying that, those who follow Christ do not make sin a lifestyle choice. We see this first by the teachings of Christ, then by the teachings of the disciples. It is our belief in the risen Lord Jesus Christ that makes us free.

In Matthew 28:19-20 ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Jesus gave the apostles the opportunity to go out in different directions through-out the land both far and wide on their own and to not only preached to those who would listen, they also taught those who did not know. They shared their experiences of their time with Jesus, they shared Gods word, they shared their belief in salvation. Jesus sent the disciples out to continue his mission here.

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” Those who believe in God without needing physical evidence or seeing miracles are blest, as faith is a deeper and more profound act than simply believing based on what one sees. Our belief in God, in Jesus and in the Holy Spirit gives us strength, hope, and purpose in our lives. Amen

Please join in the song of response hymn #254 – **That Easter Day with Joy Was Bright**

XII. SONG OF RESPONSE: Robin

#254- That Easter Day with Joy Was Bright

XIII. GIVING OF OUR GIFTS

A. Call to Bring Our Gifts: Ed

Now, let us continue to respond to God’s Word by bringing our tithes and our offerings.

B. Song of Thanks: Robin

Doxology

C. Prayer of Thanks: TBD

Please join me in prayer over our offerings: “Heavenly Father, thank you for your abundant generosity. As you have given to us, we give to you today, open our hearts to be more generous, reflecting your love. Bless these offerings to further your kingdom, and bless us as cheerful givers. Amen.”.

XIV. PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & LORD’S PRAYER: Ed

“Please be seated” We will have two times of prayer, first we will share our joys with one another and then afterwords for our concerns.

God’s mercy is something He freely gives. When we understand this, we stop living in fear and begin to walk in confidence. Mercy gives us the strength to try again, to believe again, and to trust that God is working even when we cannot see it. We lean on God more deeply, knowing that His mercy will carry us through every challenge. Even when things seem slow or uncertain, His faithfulness remains sure.

Lord, we know that each day comes with its own challenges, but we ask for strength to face them all. When we feel weak, be our strength. When we feel discouraged, lift our spirit. Help us to keep going even when things are not easy. Give us the grace to endure, to stay consistent, and to remain faithful in all we do. Let us not give up halfway, but carry us through to the end with joy and victory.

Father, fill our heart with joy. Let us not be weighed down by negativity or discouragement. Teach us to be grateful for every little thing. Let our days be filled with laughter, peace, and contentment. Even in difficult moments, help us to find reasons to give thanks. Let Your joy be our light and carry us through every situation.

GOD, WE ARE ESPECIALLY THANKFUL FOR THOSE THINGS WE LIFT TO YOU NOW... (respond "Thanks be to you oh God")

Lord, we receive strength for every challenge. When we feel tired, lift us up. When we feel discouraged, remind us of Your promises. Let no situation overwhelm us. Give us the grace to stand firm and not give up. Strengthen our spirit, our mind, and our body. Help us to face each day with courage, knowing that You are with us.

Strength from God changes how we respond to life. Instead of fear, we walk in confidence. Instead of quitting, we keep moving. Strength in our lives where challenges do not break us but build us. God uses every situation to make us stronger and closer to Him.

We pray for health as this is a gift that is not taken for granted. We pray for strength and healing. Lord, we ask for healing in our body and mind. Restore every part of us that is weak. Take away pain, sickness, and discomfort. Fill us with strength and vitality.

GOD, WE PRAY ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE THINGS WE LIFT TO YOU
NOW ... (respond "Lord in your mercy hear our prayers.")

Father, we ask for clear direction. Remove every confusion from our hearts and minds. Show us where to go, what to do, and who to connect with. Let us not waste time or energy on things that do not matter. Order our steps and align our decisions with Your will. Even when the path is not easy, give us the courage to follow You. Speak to us in ways we will understand and help us to trust Your guidance completely.

We pray all these things in the name of Jesus, the one who taught us to pray, using these words:

Our Father...

You are now invited to rise in body or in spirit and join in our sending song, hymn #817- We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight.

XV. SENDING SONG: Robin

Hymn#250- In the Bulb There Is a Flower

BulletinCHARGE & BLESSING: Ed

Go now, and let every day bring good news. Let our prayers turn into answers, and our expectations turn into reality. Surprise us with blessings that will make me rejoice. Let our days end with gratitude and celebration. And may our life be a testimony of Your faithfulness, and may others see Your goodness through us. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord, Amen.

XVI. POSTLUDE: Robin

Robin's Choice