

## SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 12, 2026

John 20:19-31

### Holy Language

The season of Easter is underway. It's a time where we are being invited to experience the full 50 days of Eastertide, embracing the resurrection promise that breathes newness and vitality into our ordinary days.

Chances are, though, there are many — perhaps even you, dear reader — who are feeling anything but hopeful. Perhaps your faith in a great God is as stale as the leftover jellybeans that filled last week's Easter baskets.

Take heart, for you are not alone. Doubts plague everyone, even the saintliest of saints among us. After her death, it was revealed how Mother Teresa battled many dark nights of the soul, questioning God's presence in her life.

And long before Mother Teresa's doubting, there was Thomas. Known as "the twin," Thomas was absent that first Easter evening when Jesus came into the room speaking words of comfort and assurance: "Peace be with you."

Still reeling from Jesus' death, Thomas couldn't believe his friends who told him the great news of Jesus being alive. He didn't dare to believe for the pain of losing Jesus once before was enough. Why dare to hope again?

To protect his heart from breaking with false hope, Thomas said that he had to see Jesus in the flesh for himself. He had to be able to put his fingers in Jesus' pierced side to believe the impossible news that he was walking among the living.

Thomas got what he asked for. Jesus returns and stands before the doubter and shows him the scars. It's then Thomas utters the first public confession of faith, "My Lord and my God!"

Doubt. It haunts us all. It makes us insist on proof today for evidence of a better tomorrow. Why do we need to see before we believe? It is not an intellectual quest as some might think, but a protective reflex born out of too many shattering-heart let downs.

Like Thomas, we can relate to the scary vulnerability of risking our hearts to believe in hopeful possibilities, especially when there's no guarantee we won't be let down yet again.

But as Eastertide gets underway, we are given the good news that with God we can risk our hearts. We can believe boldly in God's care for us, even without hard proof. Even on those days when we think God has forgotten us. God has not. God shows up at the right time. The Easter promise is that our hopes will never be crushed, because God who raised Jesus from the dead is raising us from our own tomb of doubts.

*God of new beginnings and bright promises, transform our doubts into beautiful truths this Eastertide. Open our guarded hearts to the amazing possibilities that You have waiting for us. And help us, O God, to always believe without the proof we often insist on. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*

*(Rev. Donna Frischknecht Jackson is a communications specialist for the United Church of Christ and author of today's Sunday Bulletin.)*



# St. John's Grace United Church of Christ

1000 S Rolling Road, Catonsville, Maryland 21228

**Second Sunday of Easter**

**April 12, 2026 11:00 AM**

## ***Vision Statement:***

Our vision is to be a community of faith and a voice of hope following Jesus' way of love and service.

[www.stjohnsuccmd.com](http://www.stjohnsuccmd.com)

*Nursery care is available during service for young children.*

## **ORDER OF WORSHIP**

+ Please rise in body or in spirit                      Congregation reads text in ***bold italic.***

### **WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE**

#### **Welcome and Announcements**

#### **Centering Prayer and Silence**

Hear the words of Jesus, "I am the vine, you are the branches. Anyone who abides in me, and I in that person, is the one who bears much fruit. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you." These things have been spoken to us so that the joy of Christ may be in us and that our joy will be complete. Amen.

#### **Silent Meditation**

#### **Lighting of the Presence Candle**

In lighting this candle, we acknowledge that:  
***God is here, now, everywhere, always.***

#### **+Invocation and Call to Worship**

Who among us hears the cry of the poor?

***How many open their hearts and heed the Call?***

The plight of the world is a wound to the very heart of Love.

***Blessed are those that lovingly respond.***

There is a new song in my heart, a song of praise to the Beloved.

***May we see and rejoice, may we put our trust in Love.***

What joy to live in Oneness with You.

***If we proclaim Your beauty and grace, who could measure it?***

We tell the glad news of Love's way to all who will listen.

***We tell of Love's grace within our hearts and we speak of Love's healing power.***

**+Opening Hymn:**                      The Day of Resurrection                      NCH #245

#### **Morning Prayer**

We come before you Holy One, in this sacred season of Easter, knowing that we must humbly ask for your help and grace: We have given in to illusions, we have trouble with taking responsibility, we make mistakes, and we are often ignorant of the meaning and value of the life that surrounds us. At times we forget our purpose. Our actions can produce suffering, and we deny this inconvenient truth. We ask for forgiveness and for the ability to forgive ourselves, so that we can move forward in life and grow into our purpose in this world.

#### **Prayer for Transformation**

Let us pray together:

***We trust in your presence, and we have listened to your words. We wait for the revelation of Christ within us, and we wait for the peace that comes from living according to your promises. May we choose love as a path through every pain, kindness as the fulfillment of every action, mercy with every confrontation, grace for every confused moment in our lives. May we worship in spirit and truth. Amen.***

#### **The Prayer of Return**

Jesus called to us, "Come unto me all who are weary and heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Remember these words and remember that we can trust in the power of God's Grace in every place and time. Amen.

#### **+Passing of the Peace**

#### **Departure to Church School**

## WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

**The Hebrew Reading:** Psalm 16  
**Ministry of Music:** Our Savior Lives Chancel Choir  
**+The Gospel Reading:** John 20:19-31

**Reflection:** Rev. Jeff Munnis

**Hymn of Reflection:** Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day NCH #241

### Prayers for the Church and for the People

#### The 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.*

## WE SHARE OUR GIFTS

#### Invitation to Generosity:

*God calls us to be a light to the world. We make our offering as witness to God's love at work among us. In gratitude for the gifts we have received, and in hope for the light God is still bringing into the world. Amen.*

*Your generous offerings are appreciated and used for continuing the missions of this church.*

*For electronic giving, a QR code is available in the pews or in your bulletin at the end of the printed worship service.*

#### +Doxology

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God, for all that love has done;  
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen*

## WE GO OUT TO LIVE AND TO SERVE

#### +Commission and Blessing

Our worship has ended. Our service begins.  
What does God need from us?

*Simply do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God.*

Continue to serve with faith and love, depart from this time today committed to sharing the best of yourself, through extravagant generosity of time and resources, meeting the needs of others, both spoken and unspoken, seen and unseen, heard and unheard.

*We will go now seeking justice, sharing compassion, and promoting hope in the world.*

My dear friends in faith, will you go into your worlds to be people of God in Christ's name?

*We will. Amen!*

**+Closing Hymn:** Yours is the Glory NCH #253

#### +Benediction:

We welcome you this morning, and invite you to return, and worship with us every Sunday morning at 11:00 AM

*For your convenience you can scan our QR code to contribute electronically.*



## Church School every Sunday



Calling all children! We invite you to share in worship together with your children at the 11:00 am service. After opening hymns and prayers, the children depart for Church School for the remainder and continue learning about God's Word through storytelling, hands-on activities and fellowship.

## Name Tags for Members and Friends!

Members and friends are asked to wear name tags for worship time because they help other people. It is also helpful for folks who may know the face but not the name of another. Wearing a name tag is voluntary but shows that you care about others.

If you need a name tag, please ask a greeter or usher at the welcome desk to fill out a badge request slip!

### **Lost and Found:**

We have over ten pairs of glasses, 3 water bottles and one hat that have found their way into the office after services. If you or someone you know is missing one of the above, please stop by today before we pass them on.

*St. John's Grace United Church of Christ  
Stjohnsuccmd.com  
410-744-5700  
welcome@stjohnsgraceucc.org*

*Senior Pastor and Interim Minister: Rev Jeff Munnis  
Email: revjeffmunnis@stjohnsgraceucc.org  
Office Manager: Barbara Burck  
Email: barbara@stjohnsgraceucc.org*

# Connections...

Connecting our community through prayers, thoughts, and actions – no matter where we are today!

## ***WE HOLD in LOVE and PRAYER:***

*Please keep these friends and loved ones in your prayers! If there is someone you would like added to our list, let Pastor Jeff or Barbara know. The church email is [welcome@stjohnsgraceucc.org](mailto:welcome@stjohnsgraceucc.org).*

Those added to the prayer list will remain for three months before being removed. If prayers need to be continued for another three months, please let Barbara know your request.

### **Continuing Prayers**

Linda Ballard  
Family of Jermaine Stubblefield  
Family of Ella Scannello  
Family of Herb Dement  
Family of Kathy Collins  
Mary Weaver  
Lois Benson  
Family of Audrey Sears Knofski  
Luanne Schaeffer  
Family of Dr. Mary 'Tessie' Behrens  
Kathy Crout  
Family of Sharon Hamilton  
Lois Hotchkiss  
Adrian Kavanaugh

### **Serving Our Country**

Michael Barbarino    Joe Clark  
Andrew Robey        Jon Fuller  
Ty Smith                Jay Robey  
Tom Myers             Josh Tullius  
John Howard          Jason Shoemaker

### **Hospice**

### **Assisted Living**

Doris Bush  
Virginia Hoffman

### ***Prayers for the people of Cuba during power blackout***

*Keep Lois & Jim Benson in your prayers as Lois recovers from her back surgery.*

**Upcoming Meetings & Events**

Transition Team Meeting	Tues. Apr 14 <sup>th</sup>	6:30 pm	Meeting Rm
Brightview Bible Study	Wed, Apr 15 <sup>th</sup>	1:00 pm	Brightview
Vendor & Craft Fair	Sat, Apr 18 <sup>th</sup>	10:00-2:00 pm	Hall
Ministries Council Mtg	Tues, Apr 21 <sup>st</sup>	6:30 pm	Zoom
Board of Trustees Mtg	Tues, Apr 21 <sup>st</sup>	7:00 pm	Zoom
Westside Shelter Serving	Mon, Apr 27 <sup>th</sup>	Lunch & Dinner	
Mad Hatter Tea Party	Sun, May 3 <sup>rd</sup>	12:00 pm	Hall
Vacation Bible School	June 22 – 28 <sup>th</sup>	Save the Date!	

**Governing Body Minutes**

Our governing body consists of the Board of Trustees and the Ministries Council. Meetings are held monthly via Zoom. Interested parties are welcome. Minutes of the meetings are posted in the office hallway. Contact the office if you would like a paper copy or email copy.

**View Past Services on our Website**

If you missed a worship service here at St. John’s Grace, you can now view the service on our website!  
Go to [www.stjohnsuccmd.com](http://www.stjohnsuccmd.com) **Worship/ Online Worship** tab and scroll down to the service you would like to view. They are on our YouTube channel so you can subscribe if you like.

**Deadline for Submitting Announcements**

Announcements or changes to announcements need to be submitted by noon on Tuesday prior to the Sunday service to be included in the bulletin. Email to [barbara@stjohnsgraceucc.org](mailto:barbara@stjohnsgraceucc.org).



**Calling All Bakers!**



St. John’s Grace Spring Craft & Vendor Event is Saturday, April 18, 2026, from 10am to 2pm.

We will be having a Bake Table and need donations of all kinds of baked goods! (cakes, cupcakes, cookies, brownies, etc).  
*Please contact Sandy McCawley or Sandy Rose if you can donate.*

Thank you for supporting this event! And don’t forget to invite your family and friends to come to the Spring Fair!

**CEA: April continues with Mac ‘n Cheese!**

**All kinds of Mac n’ Cheese are needed!**

As usual, CEA welcomes ANY food, at any time!  
CEA can use any donations so please pick up whatever you can for our neighbors!  
**When Faith Goes to Market – It Always Takes a Basket!**



**Westside Men’s Shelter Mission – Now Serving**

We will again be serving lunch and dinner to the men at Westside Shelter on **Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup>**!

We will also be needing donated cakes to be shared with the men. For serving lunch, arrive at the shelter by 11:30 am. For serving dinner, arrive at 5:30 pm. Desserts are due at church by Sunday, April 26<sup>th</sup>. The signup sheet is on the bulletin board in the Narthex.

**Vacation Bible School  
Taking Registrations Now**



June 22<sup>nd</sup> to June 26<sup>th</sup>  
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

**Accept the Challenge** and come with us to Snowball Mountain for exciting winter sports events.

*"I can do all things through him who strengthens me"*  
**Phil 4:13**

To sign up go to:  
<https://stjohnsgraceucc.mycokeburyvbs.com>



St. John's Grace UCC 1000 S Rolling Road Catonsville, MD 21228  
[www.stjohnsuccmd.com](http://www.stjohnsuccmd.com) 410-744-5700  
[welcome@stjohnsgraceucc.org](mailto:welcome@stjohnsgraceucc.org)



ST. JOHN'S GRACE UCC  
**SPRING FAIR**  
CRAFT & VENDOR EVENT

**SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 2026**  
**10AM TO 2PM**

ST. JOHN'S GRACE UCC  
1000 SOUTH ROLLING ROAD, CATONSVILLE 21228

**Lots of Vendors and Crafters**

Food - Raffles - Cake Walk - White Elephant Table -  
Baked Goods Table - Pick-A-Prize Baskets -  
Kids' Area with Earth Day Crafts & Activities  
and

**Groundhog Landscaping** will be on site selling  
spring plants, flowers, and more!

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: CONTACT LAURA @ 410-897-2534

You're Invited  
TO A



Don't  
Be  
Late!

**MAD  
HATTER  
TEA PARTY**

Sunday, May 3, 2026  
12:30 PM

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*Savory & Sweet Treats*  
*Variety of Teas*

Fellowship Hall

Tickets \$25 per person

