



A Worship Series for the Easter Season
(adaptable for any time of year)
Non-lectionary

Get out of bed, Jerusalem! Wake up. Put your face in the sunlight. . . . The whole earth is wrapped in darkness, all people sunk in deep darkness, but God rises on you, God's sunrise glory breaks over you. — Isaiah 60: 1-6

The butterfly has long been a symbol of the resurrection of Jesus, as well as our own resurrection as we emerge from the power of fear and death. In this series, we will consider the process of metamorphosis as a guide to examine our own transformations from cocoons and tombs to the unfurled beauty of all God calls us to be.

This series can be started on Easter Sunday, or the Second Week of Easter (in the case of the latter, delete the "Fly" service). If you are using this in a time of year other than the Easter Season, delete the "Journey" Pentecost service and end with "Fly."

Tombs and Cocoons: Trusting the Dark

[Easter or Second Week of Easter; or any other time of year]

“The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Child of God... “I am God’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her. — Luke 1: 26-38

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” — John 20: 1-18

The caterpillar’s instinct about cocooning — entering the nurturing dark of gestation — is paralleled in the story of Jesus’ birth from the womb of Mary, the dark of the burial tomb from which he emerged, and our own willingness for transformation. “Emerging” is inherent in the Christian story and in our story as followers of Jesus. But it also means trusting the Divine when we aren’t sure what’s “next” for us. Will we allow ourselves to trust in the dark where transformation begins?

Coming Out: Leaving Comfortable Places

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible. - Hebrews 11: 1-3

As ever-emerging spiritual creatures, we cannot contain our selves — the selves God has created us to be. Coming out as people and as a church from what we have known into a new identity is filled with anxiety and unknowing. Emerging will take effort and surrendering to “the assurance of things hoped for” even though we cannot yet see what the future holds.

Open: Into the Light

Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while

he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. - Luke 24: 28-49

The story of faith is not one of arrival but of journey. The new butterfly's struggle to push out of its confines produces a fissure that cannot be undone. There is no going back, the journey to a new existence has commenced. The post-resurrection story of Jesus opening the hearts of his fellow travelers along the road to Emmaus invites us to be companions of the one who will open us into the light of a new day.

Unwrap: Waking Up

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said. . . . Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go." — John 11: 1-44

In the opening of the tomb of Lazarus, in the unwrapping of his funeral clothes, the community had to face their unknowing — and perhaps disbelief — and trust that the resurrection Jesus had facilitated was real. The range of emotions was vast. As the butterfly's cozy environment cracks further open still, it is the effort of the process of emerging that makes change possible — waking up, rolling away the stone, unwrapping what will be.

Unfold: Claiming New Possibilities

"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, [d] and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." - Matthew 16: 13-20

Once out of the cocoon, the new butterfly has much to do to prepare for flight. Wings are not yet ready. Small and undernourished, they long for expansion —

to move beyond this awkward in-between-ness. As we consider our own metamorphosis, we remember how Jesus renamed “Simon” as “Peter”—a description of “the rock” upon which the church would be built. Are we willing to accept that God’s possibilities may come in ways we never imagined, perhaps expanding our notion of who we are in this world?

Let Go: Leaving Behind What We Don’t Need

Then Moses told Aaron, “Say to the entire Israelite community, ‘Come before God, for your grumblings have been heard.’” While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of God appearing in the cloud. God said to Moses, “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am your God.’” — Exodus 16

Stretching to the fullness of new potential, the butterfly begins to sense the calling to new heights. Expansion of wings, however, means something profound — it cannot ever go back into the cocoon. Not even if it wanted to. And so it is time to leave it behind. The Israelites that left Egypt were aching for freedom and yet when faced with the disorientation of all that was new and familiar, many began crying to go back. Letting go of the past requires deep trust in the God who has promised to be with us always.

Fly: Daring New Heights

[Delete if you started the series on the Second Week of Easter]

Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Sir, your sins are forgiven.” — Mark 2: 1-5

Finally the moment has arrived! The butterfly launches into its new environment — the heights that are now possible through transformation into what it was always meant to be. Nothing will hold it back. When the crowds made it impossible for the friends of the paralytic to get him to Jesus, they broke through the roof of the home where Jesus was. We too can be roof-breakers, we can “raise the roof” into new ways of moving and being in the world. What was bound

has been freed! Let us boldly look like, act like, know ourselves to be the healed and freed people we truly are!

Journey: The Places We Will Go

[Pentecost or delete if you are doing this series in a different time of year]

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. — Acts 2: 1-4

Then Peter began to speak to them, “I truly understand that God shows no partiality.” — Acts 10: 34-36

Oh, the colors, the beauty, the unabashed and exuberant expression of all that we are together! This celebration is like none other — brought to its fullest embodiment as we emerge and dare new heights! In the emerging of the church in the book of Acts, a series of events in the life of Peter lead him to the understanding that God shows no partiality and all are welcome in this journey of new life in Christ. Upon this rock, the Spirit builds a church that offers hope to the hopeless, strength for the weary and new life to those who think theirs is over. Upon these things, this church will continue this mission to a world that so desperately needs a people who know the power of transformation!