

Easter sunrise 2020

I think it's so right to gather in the memorial garden, and this worship service was designed to be here.

I actually wish we could do it all the time. To be with these saints in glory. To lament and hope, but also to be mindful of a better, bigger reality.

I look around at a few I have known—John, Winifred, Annette, Mary. I celebrate others I didn't know, but am grateful to be with—Brian, John, Joanne, Jesse, Ordean, Claire, Wayne, Andrew.

Then I also think of the others—this week Dolly and Betty were with me. I picture Les and Roger and Dorrie and Cynthia and Andy and Rosamond and Carol, and just this week my grandma Irene. I think of the connections, expanding this circle, those I didn't know but whom others loved and cared for, like Otto and Gary and Caroline and more. I think back in time, to those who shape our gathering in their words and songs and by their faith, and it stretches around the globe and for centuries, or eons, if we acknowledge broader life in this grand communion of saints.

For every gathering, not just funerals or All Saints celebrations, we are connected in faith, so it would always make sense to be present in the memorial garden.

But especially today. Today obviously begins in a cemetery, or a memorial garden. It begins at a tomb, in the face of loss and of grief. But now with this tomb today, it's not just an occasion to recall or to remember, in the usual sense of the word of looking back, in the past. It is better remembering in what has been dismembered, as members of the body of Christ, being brought back together. As Christ himself is brought back to us, we are brought back to each other.

Of course that stretches much further these days. It is not only beyond the grave, but extensively within this life, as we are cut off, as virus concerns make us restrict what should be. I'm grateful for those of you who join this worship service remotely and are able to participate. These services have even widened our

circle as those far away have been able to be part of these new gatherings. That is beautiful.

Still, we are waiting for when it won't be like this, when life will go on, when relating in relationships will be what it should be, when we are able to be together again and are remembered.

In small ways of distancing now and in the unfathomable distance caused by death, we turn to Easter and Jesus, whose good news breaks out of the tomb, is shaken loose, can't be kept in, and whose Spirit is on the move to enliven.

Most vitally, this is about the distance with God being bridged. God in our flesh, and nothing we do or leave undone, nothing that happens to us in this life and nothing that ends life, is able to separate us from God. Here in this small quiet gathering around a memorial garden, on this day at the barrier of a tomb—preceded by denial, betrayal, desertion, injustice, and death and burial—here we remember, no separation will stand. We are brought together again in God's love. We are reunited in life.

We aren't on a path of entropy and isolation. Though we cannot yet see the ending, we are on a path untrodden as we follow Jesus going ahead of us, to be reunited for the sake of life.

I mostly love this morning and the memorial garden gathering, then, not for looking back, but for a hint of what is to come. It is coming to us in love in days ahead, as we keep figuring this out. And, most assuredly, it is coming to us in a future that is good, that is together, that is as it should be. It is with Jesus.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!