

**Sunday, April 17, 2022 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
Easter Sunday**

**Bible Study – John 20:1-18 or Luke 24:1-12 and Acts 10:34-43
“God Raised Him”**

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes)

In groups of two or three, respond to the following, “What gives you hope this Easter?”

John 20:1-18 Context. Mary Magdalene was a well-to-do woman who was one of Jesus’ closest disciples. In John’s Gospel, it is Mary Magdalene who discovers the empty tomb and tells Peter and John. After Peter and John leave the tomb, Mary remains to mourn for Jesus. It’s then that she encounters first the angels in the tomb, and then the risen Christ in the garden, whom she mistakes at first for the gardener. When she realizes who he is, she tries to “hang on” to him, as though nothing had changed. But Jesus says to her, “Do not hold on to me,” as though to say, “I will continue to be with you, not in the old way but in a new way.” Mary Magdalene is the first to proclaim the Good News of Jesus’ resurrection, and she has often been called “the apostle to the apostles.”

Acts 10:34-43. Context. The Acts of the Apostles is “Volume 2” to the “Volume 1” of the Gospel of Luke. Luke wanted to show that the new thing that God was doing in Jesus didn’t just end with his death and resurrection. The story of Cornelius is central to the spread of the Gospel (Good News) to the Gentiles (non-Jews). Cornelius was a Roman centurion living in Caesarea, the Roman capital of Judea. He believed in God and treated the poor kindly, but was not a Jew. Cornelius had had a vision of an angel who told him to summon Peter who was staying in the nearby town of Joppa. As Cornelius’ servants arrived in Joppa, Peter himself had a vision in which he was told that God makes no distinction between “clean” and “unclean,” meaning, no distinction between Jew and Gentile. Peter went with them back to Caesarea. In this week’s reading, Peter explains to Cornelius how God shows no “partiality” (God doesn’t play favorites) but receives anyone from any group who comes to God and God will forgive their sins. Peter’s “sermon” tells the whole story of the Gospel of Jesus Christ – from his baptism, to his resurrection, and to his appearances to the disciples after his resurrection – in just a few verses.

Read John 20:1-18 or Luke 24:1-12

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

Read John 20:1-18 or Luke 24:1-12 again

Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- What's your favorite part of the Easter story?
- What part of the Easter story gives you the most hope? [empty tomb, linen wrappings (a sign of order in chaos), Jesus calling Mary by name, the disciples running to the tomb], etc.

Read Acts 10:34-43

- What does it mean to be a “witness”?
- What does it mean to be a Christian witness?
- How has Easter, the resurrection of Jesus, made a qualitative difference in your life?
- Where is God continuing the work of holiness in your life?
- (R) What might it look for you to be a witness of the Resurrection every day?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

God of the Resurrection, we are still in awe of the fact that Jesus has been raised from the dead. You continue to shatter our expectations of what is possible. We are thankful that Jesus' resurrection from the dead is a guarantee that one day we too will experience Resurrection. Empower us as witnesses of this truth that others might see Resurrection life in us. **Amen.**

And now we pray 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.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.