

North Branford Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
The Order of Worship for Sunday, April 11, 2021
The Second Sunday of Easter

Prelude *Guardian Angel* Frank, arr. J. Van Antwerpen

Gathering

Greetings

Responsive Call to Worship

Leader: Good morning, Church, and Eastertide Greetings! Have you ever heard the expression “beyond the shadow of a doubt”?

People: Sure! It must be nice to have that kind of certainty about life and things.

Leader: But what if instead of being beyond the shadow of doubt, you were right in the middle of it?

People: Like Thomas, when the other disciples, without him there, had seen the risen Christ? He just couldn't believe Jesus was alive until he saw for himself and had first-hand proof.

Leader: And you know what? Jesus graciously found Thomas in that shadow of doubt, and brought him into the light of faith, not judging him, but encouraging him.

People: And when we earnestly come to Jesus with our doubts, wrestling with our faith and seeking truth, he will meet us, too!

All: Lord, may our doubts and questions draw us into a deeper relationship with you, one where we don't need to see to believe, except with the eyes of our hearts! In your name we pray, Amen.

Cantored Chorus: The strife is o'er, the battle done;/ now is the victor's triumph won;/ now let the song of praise be sung:/ Alleluia! / Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Prayer of Invocation & The Lord's Prayer - Together, as One.

Holy Spirit, sometimes my faith feels weak, sometimes I find myself questioning what I believe, maybe struggling with doubt and despair. In those times of wrestling, please strengthen my trust, ignite my hope, and equip me with wisdom and courage for my journey. Sharpen my spiritual senses, and guide me in my search for answers, always leading me to the One who is “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6).

And as we have prayed to you, Holy Spirit, we now pray to you, Dear Father, with the words your Son taught us...

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

Hymn of Praise & Preparation *Breathe on Me, Breath of God*

Preparing

A Reading from the Old Testament Genesis 32: 22-30

A Reading from the Epistles Hebrews 11:1-3; 8; 24-25; 32-34;
12: 1-3

The Offertory Invitation

Presenting of our Offerings, Gifts & Tithes

Cantored Offertory Response: Praise God from whom all blessings flow!
Praise Him all creatures here below! Praise Him above, ye heavenly host!
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Prayer of Confession and Dedication - Together, as One.

Lord, thank you for the gift of faith, for the opportunity to be in relationship with you. Forgive us for the times we have wandered off, when we have doubted and not trusted in you, or when we have not had the patience and compassion for those who are struggling to believe. Strengthen our faith, and help us help others strengthen theirs. Open our eyes to see the difference between healthy questioning as a part of faith, and unhealthy doubting that weakens our faith. Draw us closer to you, and as we continue receiving your blessings, may we offer you our thanks, while sharing those blessings with others, so we each may discover new life in this season of Easter. Help our living and our giving joyfully proclaim to a world in need the truth that “Jesus is risen, risen indeed!” We now again dedicate our offerings and our lives to you. Hallelujah and Amen!

Children's Message

Gift of Music *Oh, Risen, Take Me Home* Haden Allen Ayers

Prayers of & for the People

Prayers of Joy and Concern; Testimonies of God's Work in our Lives
Time of Silence
Pastoral Prayer

Gloria Patri (*recited not sung*)

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without
end. Amen, Amen.**

Proclaiming

A Reading from the New Testament John 20: 24-29

Sermon *Without a Doubt?*

Parting

Hymn of Sending Forth *Why Must Doubting Be a Bad Thing?*
tune: Nettleton; lyrics: Stephen Fearing

Call to Service & Benediction

Sharing the Peace of Christ

Pastor: As disciples of Christ, we have been graced with Christ's peace,
peace for our own lives, peace to share. And so with great joy, I
gift you the peace of our Lord.

People: As I gift you.

Pastor: Let us now share that peace of Christ with each other by waving,
and by calling, e-mailing and texting those from whom we're
physically apart. And let us carry that peace of Christ with us into
this Easter Season, and into our world, as we together say, **AMEN!**

Postlude *Preludium* P. Żelichowski

Deacon – Fred Jungeblut
Liturgy Assistant– Wendy Tarry
Music Director – Kelliann Festa
Pastor – The Rev. Vance Taylor
Ministers – Our Members!

WE ARE THE CHURCH TOGETHER!

North Branford Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

*Christ-centered Teaching
Scripture-based Preaching
To our neighbors: Outreaching*



April 11, 2021

Hymn 1 - *Breathe on Me, Breath of God*

- 1 Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love the way you love,
And do what you would do.
- 2 Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until my will is one with yours,
To do and to endure.
- 3 Breathe on me, Breath of God,
So shall I never die,
But live with you the perfect life
For all eternity.

Hymn 2 - *Why Must Doubting Be a Bad Thing*

- 1 Why must doubt be such a bad thing? Why must Thomas be so shamed? Through his trauma he was kept from seeing what his friends had claimed. He was in the depths of grieving, stuck in his own deathly tomb. In his sorrow Thomas left them, soon his hidden hope would bloom.
- 2 Jesus came to see the others in a household locked in fear; showed his arms, his hands, his body, all the scars caused by the spear. Jesus breathed the Spirit on them, passed the peace they longed to know. On their knees they worshiped Jesus, praised his name, their hearts aglow.
- 3 Thomas came and soon rejoined them, then they said “we’ve seen the Lord!” But his eyes demanded seeing Jesus’ flesh pierced by the sword. Jesus came and greeted Thomas, showed him he was no facade. Kneeling down and filled with wonder, Thomas said, “My Lord, My God!”
- 4 Why must doubt be such a bad thing - seeking what we do not know? It can help us journey forward; after all, it’s how we grow! Faith is found in doubtful moments, times when we cannot believe. Christ will find us all regardless, more than we could e’er conceive!

Genesis 32: 22-30

²² The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³ He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. ²⁴ Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. ²⁵ When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob’s hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶ Then he said, “Let me go, for the day is breaking.” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go, unless you bless me.” ²⁷ So he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.” ²⁸ Then the man said, “You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.” ²⁹ Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And there he blessed him. ³⁰ So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.”

Hebrews 11: 1-3; 8; 24-25; 32-34

¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. ³ 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. ⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh’s daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ³² And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

Hebrews 12: 1-3

¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. ³Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart.

John 20: 24-29

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ 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.”

²⁶ 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.” ²⁷ 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.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ 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.”

If you should ever doubt there is a God, just look at all the beauty around you. And, if you look closely, you will see that even the tiniest grain of sand holds its own beauty.

~fran v. giambalvo

