

DISCIPLES WOMEN
GENERAL PROGRAM

Date: 2014

Authored By:

Rev. Lisa Caldwell-Reiss

Co-Pastor
First Christian Church
Fort Thompson,
Kentucky

Easter Program ~ When the Beginning Comes at the End

Leader's Guide:

Room:

You will want to set up in a room with an outside door or windows that can open, nearby. Also, make sure your room will accommodate your musical and technical choices, including electric and Wifi.

Song Suggestions:

- ◆ “In the Garden” - from the Chalice Hymnal #227
- ◆ “Because He Lives” - from the Chalice hymnal, #562
- ◆ “Sing My Song Backwards” - from the Chalice Hymnal, #334
- ◆ “In the Bulb There is a Flower” - from the Chalice Hymnal, #638
- ◆ “Woman, Weeping in the Garden” - from the Chalice Hymnal, #223
- ◆ “Open Our Eyes, Lord” - from Chalice Praise, #44
- ◆ “The Garden Hymn” - from the Sacred Harp collection.

Audio-Visual Possibility: *(Use in place of the Cued Meditation below-We Reflect & Wonder.)*

Find a recording of one of the suggested songs that you find inspiring. If you have an instrumentalist or soloist in your group, or in your congregation, you can invite them to prepare one or more of these pieces. You can pair the music with a slideshow of garden images (don't be afraid to use dirt and planting images as well as gorgeous flowers) or with a banner, painting or a series of photos hung in the room. If you do a slideshow, you can use the cued meditation below as an outline.

If you have Wifi or internet capabilities in your gathering space, you can use the slide show at: <http://prezi.com/5smgshqdvln7/a-walk-in-the-garden-of-new-life/>

which is based on the Cued Meditation you will find at the end of this service.

Scripture: Learning to Live with Miracles

John 11:1-16

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, [a] “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” ⁴ But when Jesus heard it, he said, “This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” ⁵ Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶ after having heard that Lazarus [b] was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” ⁸ The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?” ⁹ Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. ¹⁰ But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.” ¹¹ After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.” ¹² The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.” ¹³ Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵ For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” ¹⁶ Thomas, who was called the Twin, [c] said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

John 14:1-7

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe ^[a] in God, believe also in me. ² In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ^[b] ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to the place where I am going.” ^[c] ⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you know me, you will know ^[d] my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

John 20:24-29

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin ^[a]), 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.”

Supplies:

___ 2-5 canning jars or glass bowls with dried flowers-

you could invite people to bring in dried flowers to symbolize a loss, grief or transition that they are ready to let go; **they will not get them back**

___ Scriptures printed for 3 readers

___ Hymnals or song sheets

___ Packets of seeds- a variety of types, at least one for each person appropriate to your growing zone & season

___ Worship Center:

___ Quilt or tapestry or other hand made item

___ A candle or lamp

___ A well-worn item, much handled treasure from your home

___ The dried flowers & seed packets

___ Large card or poster with the words, "By Faith I Will.." and markers

Colors: white, gold and scarlet

Order of Worship:

We Gather Together

Invocation

God, Our Creator,

you spoke the word and the first garden came to be,
with dirt and decay, water and air, sunshine, seed, flower and fruit.

Meet us in the garden of our hearts where we gather now,
eager and edgy, with tools in hand, ready to garden with you.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Scripture Reading 1 - John 11:1-16

The Flowers We Bring

Take out the dried flowers and handle them. Share their significance with the group.

Where are they from? What memories linger in their winey, aging fragrance?

What was lost when this flower was cut and set aside? What emptiness do these petals, flakes and crumbs leave behind as they gradually turn to dust and blow away? What doubts or challenges have engaged your faith because of this moment?

Opening Song

We Observe the Mystery

Scripture Reading - John 24:19-29

Consider the Scars

How do Jesus' scars function on the resurrected Christ?

The evidence of earthly pain, hatred, sorrow and suffering are not left behind in the new life. What role does doubting play in this discovery?

Think of a death, a loss, an ending, a grief in your own life. What scars are left? How is God at work transforming them for you in new life? What do they begin to mean in the new life, the new normal that follows?

Can you imagine what this might mean to us beyond this life? What insight or hope do our scars give us?

Gather up some of the dried flowers in your hands. Hold them gently or place them on a surface near you where you can see them throughout the Meditation.

We Reflect and Wonder

Cued Meditation—“Walking in the Garden of New Life”

Scatter the Flowers

As the Spirit and the Song of Reflection move you, take your dried flowers to the nearest window or door and let them scatter in the open air.

Song of Reflection

We Open to Change

Scripture Reading - John 14:1-7

Prayer

Holy God, you know our hearts and minds so well. You know everything.
So, we will not hide from you our frustration with the advice you have given us.

We confess. We do let our hearts be troubled.

Even more, we can't always imagine how to let them be anything except afraid.

How can we let go of anxiety and fear?

How can we even be brave enough to doubt?

Holy God, you know our hearts and minds so well. You know everything.

Thank you for being patient while we struggle. Thank you for continuing to prod and urge us to dig deeper. Thank you for facing our doubts and challenges head on, especially when we don't think we can. Thank you for sifting through the soil of our faith, time after time, You teach us what is good for us. You scoop out what is not. You put the tools into our

hands and say, “Here you can do this, too.” We are so grateful.

Holy God, you know our hearts and minds so well. You know everything.

So, knowing us like you do right now, show us how to ask you for what we need to make this glorious garden grow into all you know it can be.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

The Seeds Before Us

Take a packet of seeds from the worship center and hold them in your hands.

What do we know about these seeds? Where do they come from? What promises do they hold? If my faith is a flower or a plant, a fruit, a tree, a vegetable...which one would it be? Why? What might happen-good or bad- if I plant these seeds? What will happen if I do not?

We Act in Faith

Plotting New Life

These seeds are a token, a small reminder, of a much greater truth. Potential comes in many forms, often small and unimpressive. Promises are packed into tiny spaces. Life begins and ends in the most untidy of places. Birth and decay cannot be separated, each needs the other. Let us commit ourselves now to serving the Gardener of All Life, Our Creator, Redeemer and Encourager.

Take a packet of seeds and claim it. Put your name on it. Decide right now, what will I do with these seeds? Will I plant them? Where? Will I share them? With whom? Will I gather more seeds and plant bouquets? Will I plant shade trees? Will I plant fruit or veggies for food? Name it, decide right now. And write it on the card in the Worship center. Sign your name.

Closing Song

*Cued Meditation***“Walking in the Garden of New Life”**

Make sure you are seated comfortably. Take three or four deep breaths. You may close your eyes if you want to. Become aware of your body from head to toe, taking in an awareness of how you feel as you take in breath.

Imagine a room within your self. It is plain and still. You sit in silence. It may be dark or dimly lit. It is peaceful. Sit here for a moment and take what you need from this still place.

(medium pause)

Now, see a window in the wall across the room from you. Through it, you can see a garden. Are there shrubs? Flowers? Fruit trees? What season is it in the garden? What can you hear in the garden? Does there seem to be anyone else there? Stay here, experiencing the garden through the window as long as you like.

(medium pause)

When you are ready, get up and walk to the window. How does your view expand? What can you see now that you could not before? Do you see something you want to know more about?

(short pause)

When you are ready, turn and see the doorway from your room to the garden. Stop a moment to look at the doorway. Is it open? Closed? What shape is it? Is there a lock or a knob or a window on your door?

What does the threshold feel like as you step forward?

(short pause)

Move through your door and step into the garden. Go where you are drawn. You may want to get close to something and watch it. You may want to stroll around and take in several sights. You may want to pick up a tool and start pruning or digging. You may find a place to just sit and wait.

(medium pause)

Remind yourself that God is here in this garden with you. As you continue to be in your garden, let yourself become aware of God with you. Whether you talk or walk or work or sit together, enjoy the presence. If you have questions about the garden, you can ask God. God may have a question for you....listen.

(long pause – at least 3 or 4 time as long as before)

When you are ready, prepare to leave the garden and return your mind to this room. Take another deep breath. Remind yourself that this garden is a place within your heart and you can return here any time. Take another deep breath and gradually open your eyes.