

Today, for our Sunday spiritual practice, we will remember in our minds and in our bodies how Jesus' friends and students began the first Easter closed up in fear, grief, and despair, often unable to even recognize Jesus when Jesus came to them.

And then we will open ourselves up, welcome Jesus calling us by name and offering peace, welcome Jesus' touching us and offering purpose, welcome Jesus opening up all of God to us and leaving us in love and wonder.

If you're willing to participate with me, I'm going to invite us to close and then open our eyes, to clench up our hands and bodies and then release them and open our hands, and then lastly to fold our body our body closed and then open it up thoroughly. This last move is part of a series of body movements known to yoga practitioners as sun salutation, a practice that for thousands of years in South Asia has been helpful in opening people's bodies and minds toward the dawning of the sun, toward health, toward hope, and more. I am not a yoga teacher and am not part of the spiritual or cultural heritage of that particular practice, but I offer a part of it to us in modified form today with gratitude for the people and culture from which it has come. This practice has been a blessing for me and for others of you, I know, so we receive it with thanks.

I'm also going to ask you to think of a place of fear, a place of grief, and a place of despair in your life, from recent days, or from the past year. I encourage you both physically and emotionally to participate in a way that feels good to you today. Please only call to mind what feels OK to think on today, as we welcome the presence of God to meet our fear with peace, to meet our grief with hope and purpose, and to meet our despair with love and wonder.

Let's begin.

Close your eyes, if you are willing, and remember something that has caused you fear.

Have you been afraid of getting sick this year? Afraid of others getting sick?

Have you been anxious over your finances, or for your friends and family members' welfare?

What has made you anxious or afraid?

And now I encourage you, with your eyes still closed, to bring your hands to your heart, and then extend your hands outward as if they are holding your fear, and offer it to Jesus. Welcome Jesus meeting you in your fear.

Imagine Jesus calling you by name. Imagine Jesus saying to you: Peace, my friend. My peace I give you. As Jesus says: Peace to you, take a couple of slow and low, deep breaths. Welcome the peace.

Say with me if you like: **Jesus, I welcome your peace. (Jesus, I welcome your peace.)**

And open your eyes.

And now I encourage you to clench your fists, pull them toward your body, and close your body up as you lean forward. Remember something that has caused you grief.

What has grieved you? Has it been the death of a loved one?

A violent death, like that of Xavier Louis-Jacques in our North Cambridge neighborhood last weekend?

The injustice we've seen toward Black lives and bodies, toward Asian lives and bodies?

Has it been the losses you have face faced this year, or that your loved ones have faced?

What has caused you grief?

Imagine Jesus touching your hand now, inviting you to share your grief with God. As you feel able, start to open your hands and sit up straight again. Breathe in deeply and leave your hands open in front of you. Imagine Jesus offering a hand to you and saying: God is alive. There are good things we can do together. Will you take my hand?

Say with me if you like: **Jesus, I welcome your life. (Jesus, I welcome your life.)**

And lastly, we know that fear and grief and hard times can move us toward despair, toward a tiredness, a lack of energy and a giving up. And that's OK, but on this Easter, we remember that just as the sun has risen, we are met this moment, this day with hope, with a living, life-giving God who holds creative possibilities for every moment, no matter what has got us here.

And so to greet this God of life and hope and possibility, I invite you if you are able to safely, to fold your body over, as much as you can toward the ground, take one breath there, and then fold back upwards slowly - back, neck, head, arms, hands together, fingers pointed toward the sky, and take another breath, and pray with me: **Jesus, I welcome your hope and new possibility.**

And one more time, the same thing:

fold your body over, as much as you can toward the ground, take one breath there, and then fold back upwards slowly - back, neck, head, arms, hands together, fingers pointed toward the sky, and take another breath, and pray with me: Jesus, I welcome your hope and new possibility.

As we go to sing together now in worship, let's close in saying, if you like, the Easter creed of resurrection life. Three times I will say Christ is risen. And you will respond, if you choose: Christ is risen indeed.

Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. (3x)

Amen.

