

Holy and loving God,

On this Easter morning, in the space between dawn and day, we have come to this place in worship. Some of us are bringing joyful expectation, ready to shout our Hallelujahs. Some of us are holding hope: the hope that the good news of Easter will renew us in faith and renew our world in justice. Some of us are wondering, like Mary of Magdala and the women at the tomb on that first Easter, who came expecting to find death and found an empty tomb instead. Some of us, o God, do not know for sure why we are here at all... or what we are expecting to find, or feel. Here we are, God: in faith and in doubt, in conviction and in questioning, in awe and in anxiety, in joy and in sorrow. And you know, God. You know us. You know what we have carried with us to this place in our hearts and minds. And here, where the tomb stands empty to the sky, where the sun will rise on these red rocks like new life, you receive us as we are. You love us as we are.

On this Easter morning, o God, we have come together as strangers—but here in this place, you have made us into a community, formed in the name of Jesus. We are brought together by the good news: that Jesus who suffered unjustly on the cross, always takes his place with the suffering and oppressed; that because Jesus endured death, there is nowhere we can go that Jesus has not gone before us, and we are never alone; and that because Jesus rose from the dead, we know that the worst thing is never the last thing, that the power of evil and injustice, heartbreak and hopelessness, crushing as they seem, are not the end—your resurrection power of life and love and grace is and will be the end of the story.

On this Easter morning, o God, we pray in that Easter hope: for ourselves and for the people sitting next to us. For our neighbors nearby and far away. For the joyful and for the grieving, for the reunited and the estranged. For all who have been released from every kind of prison, and for all who are incarcerated, deported, disappeared. For people awaking to the hope of ceasefire, and those still living in the rubble of war. For all those who fear, who are at risk, who are vulnerable. For all those who offer help, who advocate, who work for justice. For all of us who do not know what the next year, or next week, will bring; and for the inspiration of those who teach us to live anyway, to love anyway, to hope anyway. For moments like this—for the beat of our hearts—for the breath in our lungs—and for your love, which surrounds us and connects us to one another, to this beautiful and fragile earth, and to you, we pray, o God, source of all love.

In Jesus' name, Amen.