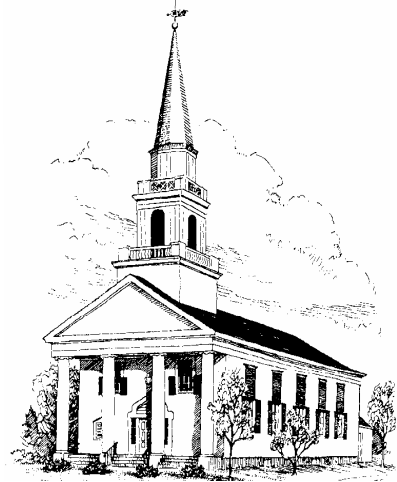


# Mystic Congregational Church, UCC

## Mystic, Connecticut

Sermon from March 23, 2008  
Rev. Barbara J. Libby  
“Easter Greetings”

Scriptures:  
Acts 10:34-43  
Matthew 28:1-10



**A**fter 2000 years, we Christians are still trying to make sense out of the empty tomb on Easter morning! Nothing about Easter is routine or predictable. Easter is shocking—there’s no way around that. Yet Easter is the beginning of our faith, not the end. Without the empty tomb on Easter morning, we would have nothing more than stories about a good man to tell.

Easter morning takes a big leap of faith from each of us! Why? Because it isn’t just that the tomb was empty on Easter morning; rather that the Resurrected Christ appeared to the women that morning and later that he appeared to the disciples and many other followers.

Easter faith is all about juxtaposing these two realities:

1. That, yes, Jesus died on the cross; and
2. That, yes, Jesus was resurrected from the dead.

By faith, on Easter morning each year, we say “Yes!” Once again! On Easter morning we say “Yes!” to the amazing and incredible reality that Jesus died for us on a cross and, three days later, was resurrected to a life eternal. On Easter morning we say “Yes!” by faith so that our eyes can be opened, so we can see and experience the Living Christ in our midst each and every day! And that is such a stupendous thing to say. That is such a remarkable and surprising and even unbelievably difficult reality to get our hands on—that we struggle every year to offer ways to talk about that event.

Through the last 2000 years, we have tried to develop symbols for and more approachable ways to point to such an amazing miracle. We use rabbits, baby chicks and nests to get at the concept of new life. We use things like butterflies to capture the idea of something appearing dead but still alive. We introduce the Easter bunny and Easter baskets with chocolate and jelly beans to help children catch a glimpse of the miracle of Easter. We set out big celebratory meals and special kinds of foods on this Easter day to set it apart from all other days.

We human beings keep trying to somehow capture this stupendous and extraordinary thing that happened on the first Easter. And of course all of our efforts fall short. Easter is shocking! Easter is full of surprise! Easter is full of miracle! Easter is almost unbelievable!

Yet Easter is the keystone of the Christian faith. For Christians, Easter is the greatest day in all history and the most important celebration day of our faith. Sure we can say that Christmas began it all when Jesus was born in human form as an infant. Yet Easter is about how life never ends! Easter is a celebration of life! Easter is all about good news! Easter reminds us of the power of life over death, the power of light over darkness, the power of joy over sorrow.

We all know about a world full of bad news. We can easily list all of the things that are bad news in this world—a war in Iraq that has gone on 5 years and killed thousands and thousands and thousands! We know about an economy here in this country that threatens to implode! We know about mortgage crises and debt crises, environmental crises and health care crises. We know all about conflicts over race and religion and gender. You name it—we all know that there's plenty of bad news all around.

Perhaps the most shocking thing for most of us is to hear that Easter is all about good news. We all need good news! Let's not lose track of the fact that it is a shocking thing to be a people of the resurrection. It is a shocking and truly amazing thing to proclaim the good news that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on that first Easter morning. Even nearly 2000 years later, it is still a shocking thing to say and to get our minds and our hearts around.

We know the story in its various forms. We know that the women were the first to go to the tomb on that morning. Instead of a dead body they found an empty tomb. Instead of a calm quiet dawn, they experienced an earthquake and the sudden arrival of a heaven-sent, glowing angel. Instead of a time to focus on their grief and loss, they were gifted great joy and an encounter with the Living Christ!

“The Resurrection is more than an extraordinary event which took place some two thousand years ago and then was over and done with, because he also sees each of us... Whether we recognize him or not, or believe in him or not, or even know his name, again and again he comes and walks a little way with us... It may be something that happens to us, or something we see in a flash of recognition, or it may be through somebody we know—we can never guess how or when or where—but somehow, miraculously, Jesus offers each one of us the bread of life, a new hope, a new vision of light that the dark world cannot overcome.” (Adapted, Frederick Buechner, *Longing for Home*, p. 149)

It is that light! It is that hope on a rampage! It is that promise of a new life eternal! It is the presence of the Risen Christ in each of our hearts! That is why we come to celebrate this Easter morning in the year of our Lord 2008!

We give thanks this day for the presence of the Risen Christ walking here among us! We give thanks and proclaim this Easter day: Christ, the Lord, is risen today! He is risen! Alleluia!

Amen.