



NEW RITUAL

Flower planting to mark reopening of a building after COVID-19

Based on Luke 24:1-12

Written by **Alaina Dobkowski** of Grand Rapids, Michigan, a student in Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary's Master of Divinity Connect program

Before the ritual, those leading will need to decide if there is a place where flowers can be planted in a particular location by the building that is reopening. If not, then perhaps a small potted flower can be given to those in attendance to take to their office or desk, or all the plants could be put together in an entryway. The leaders can be creative with how to utilize the plants; the point is to give people something tangible to do that would also serve as a reminder of beauty and hope brought into spaces that have been empty due to the pandemic. They remind us of the newness of life and fill uncertain and empty spaces, both literal and figurative.

This ritual is a passage tied to Easter, not necessarily what one would anticipate at a reopening ceremony or ritual. Yet, it is timely and relevant because of the connections between the uncertainty followed by hope in the text and in the reopening of a building. The women experienced a moment that changed everything; we have also experienced this in the past year in a variety of ways. And throughout it all, the thread of common hope in a resurrected Christ.

Supplies needed

- Flower seeds, bulbs, or potted flowers. If anyone in the community lost their life to COVID-19, consider providing perennial plants in their memory.
- Watering can

Ritual program

Leader 1: On _____ (date) we left this building, not knowing that it would be closed for the following _____ days. Today we gather together to celebrate and bless the re-opening of this building, opening doors to a place that has primarily remained empty throughout this past year.

Leader 2: *Prayer giving thanks for the opening of the building (extemporaneous)*

Reader 1: Luke 24:1-12

Reader 2: John 1:5

Leader 1: *Brief reflections on the passage that could include the following themes and ideas:*

We have the luxury of knowing the end of the resurrection story. We know that when the women go to the tomb, carrying their spices and supplies ready to prepare Jesus for burial, they will find the tomb empty. But they had no idea. They went to the tomb expecting one thing but finding another. They walked away not knowing what was going to happen next. The angels proclaimed that Jesus had risen from the dead. But what did that mean? What was going to happen next?

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Many of us can identify with the question, “What is going to happen next?!” Our last day in this building, we left expecting to return again. Much like the women in this passage, we were unaware that we were about to have an experience that would change everything. Yet in many ways we are in an opposite scenario to Mary Magdalene and the other women present. We left without our supplies. We walked away from a full building that became empty. The good news for them was that the tomb was empty. The good news for us is that we can return.

Yet, ultimately, the good news for the women that day, and the good news for us, is that new life has been found. The angels announced that Jesus was alive. We proclaim that Jesus is alive today. And, as we heard, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. Today we proclaim that this building can be used again. We can return to open a chapter of new life in our community.

To symbolize new life and in remembrance of this past year (and, if applicable to the community, in remembrance of lives lost to COVID-19) we are going to plant (*or display if planting is not appropriate*) flowers. These flowers will represent new life, beauty, and hope. They will be growing in soil that was once empty or sitting on a desk that has been empty. When you see these flowers, let them remind you of hope, and of the reality that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

Leader 2: Closing prayer and benediction

God of love,
you have overcome death
and make all things new.
Bring forth new life
in our weary and uncertain world,
so that we can move forward in confidence and hope,
filled with anticipation for what you will do.
Through the power of the living Christ,
Amen.

May God’s love embrace you,
May the Holy Spirit fill you with joy,
May Jesus’ resurrection give you hope.
Go in hope, looking for the new life God is bringing to this building and to our lives.

Flowers are distributed to community members — seeds, potted plants, or perennial flowers. They will be planted or placed inside the building.

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