



Dear Friend,

Thank you for joining FutureChurch in celebrating the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene. For decades, FutureChurch has worked to reclaim Mary Magdalene's true role in the Christian story — not as a penitent sinner, but as *Apostola Apostolorum*, the first witness to the Risen Christ, and sent as the first proclaimer of the good news of Easter and Resurrection. We are grateful for every community that gathers in her name.

We offer this prayer service for July 2026 with a particular sense of urgency. We live in a moment marked by fear, division, and the silencing of voices — in our world, in our church, and in our communities. And we believe Mary Magdalene's witness speaks directly into this moment: a woman who carried grief to the tomb, who was called by name, and who was sent to proclaim that love is stronger than death. This year's theme, ***Easter Joy as Resistance***, reflects our conviction that joy is not a retreat from the suffering of our world. It is a holy act of resistance.

We recognize that this theme may not resonate with the particular needs of your community. If that is the case, we encourage you to explore our past prayer services, which you can download at <https://futurechurch.org/mary-of-magdala-resource-index/>.

This prayer service is yours to adapt. We have designed it to be flexible, and we encourage you to make it your own. Change the readings, adjust the language, add petitions to the litany of lament, substitute songs your congregation knows and loves. What matters is that your community gathers, names its grief, and proclaims Easter hope together.

We wish you every blessing as you plan and prepare. May your celebration of Mary Magdalene be a moment of genuine joy — embodied, communal, and resistant.

Thank you again for doing your part to help reclaim Mary Magdalene for our Church and world today. If we can be of any assistance as you plan your celebration, please reach out to russ@futurechurch.org.

In hope and solidarity,

Russ Petrus, Executive Director
FutureChurch

EASTER JOY AS RESISTANCE

Celebrating the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene

Environment:

We suggest arranging a front or center altar/table, based on your space, that can serve as a focal point for the environment and liturgy.

- **Colorful flowers and greenery** - this liturgy will incorporate garden imagery from John 20 and so we recommend adorning the liturgical space with live flowers and plants.
- **A vessel of oil/water** - this liturgy includes a ritual anointing/sprinkling and so a large vessel (preferably glass/clear) should be prominently featured in the environment.
- **A large candle** – preferably the paschal candle should be lit and placed near or on the altar/table. In the absence of the paschal candle, a large pillar candle would work.
- **Icon/image of Mary Magdalene** – you might consider inviting participants to bring their own images or icons of Mary Magdalene to place at the altar. Participants could also bring symbols of joy with them to place at the altar.

Optional Procession: If your space allows for it you may choose to wait to set the liturgical environment until the opening song. Along with any liturgical ministers, invite individuals to help set the space with flowers, oil, the candle, and image of Mary Magdalene. If there are liturgical dancers in your midst, this might be an excellent way to include them. Then welcome participants to add images of Mary Magdalene or symbols of joy to the altar.

A Note on the Litany of Lament:

In John 20, Mary Magdalene travels to the tomb in the dark, carrying her grief. She does not arrive already transformed — she arrives weeping, disoriented, searching.

We begin this liturgy in the same spirit. Before we sing, before we celebrate, we travel with Mary to the tomb — naming the grief we carry in ourselves, in our communities, and in our world. We do not rush past the darkness to get to the light.

Then we sing. The opening song marks our arrival in the garden. We have not denied the grief. We have brought it with us. And now, like Mary, we find ourselves in a place where something unexpected might happen.

Ministers Needed:

- Presider/Leader(s)
- Readers (at least 2 and up to 5)
- Preacher (if different from leader)
- Anointing/sprinkling ministers (if needed)
- Musician(s)

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Litany of Lament:

This litany is meant to be representative. You may fill in with specific current events in our world, in our church, and in your community.

Leader: Dear friends,
As we gather, like Mary Magdalene, we carry grief with us.
And so let us journey to the tomb with Mary Magdalene
and name the grief, the questions, the anxieties we carry with us,
for ourselves, for our loved ones, for our communities, for our world.

Reader: Please respond, **“We bring this to the tomb and to our God”**

- The violence that wounds our world...
- The divisions that fracture our communities...
- The systems that diminish dignity and deny belonging...
- The silencing of voices: in our Church, in our communities, in our world...
- The exhaustion of those who labor for justice...
- The grief we carry in our own lives...
- *Depending upon the size of your congregation, you may consider inviting those gathered to give voice (briefly) to their own laments*

Leader: And despite this – as a Resurrection People – inspired by Mary Magdalene
We do not turn away from the suffering.
Instead we journey to the tomb.
And there, we stand in faith.
There, we wait in hope.

Opening Song:

For the opening song, we recommend something familiar to the congregation to encourage immediate participation. Joyful, rhythmic songs that invite an embodied participation are encouraged! Songs usually associated with Easter and the Easter Season would also work well. Some suggestions include:

- “Alleluia! Raise the Gospel” by Bernadette Farrell and Owen Alstott
- “Resucitó (He Is Risen)” by Kiko Argüello
- “You Shall Be My Witnesses” by Miriam Therese Winter
- “Siyahamba (We Are Marching)” – Traditional South African

Optional Procession: if there will be a procession, plan to sing as many verses or repeat as necessary to decorate the altar/liturgical space. If the congregation will be invited to add images or symbols, this can be done during an instrumental period followed by one more refrain.

Welcome and Introductory Remarks:

Leader: Welcome, friends, to this celebration of Mary Magdalene—
apostle to the apostles, first preacher of the resurrection,
and bearer of Easter hope.

We gather in a world marked by grief—
violence, division, uncertainty, and injustice.

And still—we gather as resurrection people—
in our bodies, in our stories, in our longing for new life.

Tonight, we dare to reclaim Easter joy—
not as escape, not as denial,
but as a holy act of resistance.

Opening Prayer:

Leader: And so, let us pray...
(allow for a brief period of silent centering)

God of the garden,
Womb of new life,
Breath that stirs creation into being,

You meet us in places of loss
and call us by name.

When we are bent down by grief,
when hope feels distant,
when we are tired,
when the world trembles with fear—
You are there.
Calling us into life.
Calling us into joy.

Give us the faith and courage of Mary Magdalene—
to remain near the tomb,
to recognize you in unexpected places,
and to proclaim, even when the world is not ready,
that love is stronger than death.

We ask this in Jesus' name,
Amen

Invite the congregation to be seated.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading :

Isaiah 61:1–3

The Inclusive Bible

Reader:

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

The Spirit of the Exalted One is upon me,
for God has anointed and sent me:
to bring good news to those who are poor;
to heal broken hearts
to proclaim release to those held captive
and liberation to those in prison;
to announce a year of favor from the Exalted one,
and the day of God's vindication;
to comfort all who mourn,
To provide for those who grieve in Zion --
to give them a wreath of flowers instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of tears;
a cloak of praise instead of despair;
They will be known as trees of integrity
planted by the Exalted one to display God's glory.

The Word of God

Thanks be to God

Collage of Readings on Joy:

We have chosen four readings representative of the ways marginalized communities are embracing and embodying joy as resistance. You are welcome to use these readings, find your own, or – if length is a concern – proceed to the Gospel Acclamation and Proclamation.

A reading from “Migrant Joy as an Act of Resistance” –by Maritza Félix.

Meritza Felix is a Latina journalist and immigrant who traveled the U.S.-Mexico border throughout 2025. This is [her reflection](#) on what it means to refuse erasure — and to choose light.

This year I’ve traveled the border and the country with a target on my back: migrant, Latina, Spanish-speaking, accented, storyteller. I represent what makes much of this country uncomfortable. I’m what some would snap away. Decades of administrations have shoved me into the shadows — but I refuse to stay there. I am. We are. We will be light. Nothing turns us off.

The bravest thing I’ve done this year is resist. From hope, joy, that damn resilience making us bloom in crises. 2026 will be the same or worse. We’ll be exhausted; fatigue will drop our guard at times. But we’ll be there. It doesn’t scare me — it excites me. Mending is one of our best-kept secrets.

2026 will be the year of attacks on migrants and community journalism, and I demand the same urgent response we see for natural disasters. This is an emergency. Collective courage will unite us to claim what’s ours: democracy, land, dignity. The overlooked, the ignored — we’ll form an army, not one rising in arms, but one building from joy, not rage.

A powerful resistance: unbowed by threats, unseduced by empty promises, planting itself and pressing on, because surrender hands them the win once more.

A reading from “Touch and See” – by Maureen Rasmussen.

Maureen Rasmussen is a Catholic trans woman. This reflection was prepared as part of a series on queer Catholic joy on [Maxwell Kuzma's Substack](#).

Joy, unlike happiness, does not fade away. It is the realization that God is always with us — and always will be.

Two years ago, entering the third week of Easter, I traveled to California for a life-giving gender affirmation procedure. As the anesthesia wore off, I was overwhelmed with indescribable joy. That same joy permeates my soul to this day — the joy of passing from the darkness of physical and mental trauma, cruelty, and rejection as a trans person, to the immense light of Jesus' love and acceptance for all.

In the complicated world that we live in, it can be tempting to lose hope. But Paul reminds us in Romans 5 that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts.

There is a narrative in the world that denies the existence of trans persons. The world needs to know that we are real — and that we are faith-filled children of God.

I find comfort in knowing the apostles struggled in seeing, too. Jesus stood in their midst and said: Peace be with you. They were startled — they thought they were seeing a ghost. And Jesus said: *Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have.* And while they were still incredulous for joy, he asked them, *Have you anything to eat?*

We are real. We seek a place at the table. And like those apostles, I am incredulous for joy.

May we always remain hopeful. I pray for you, and with you. God bless you.

A reading from “Black Joy: Resistance, Resilience, and Reclamation” –by Elaine Nichols.
The National Museum of African American History and Culture at the Smithsonian has explored Black Joy as a living tradition of resistance and resilience. This is [Elaine Nichols’s reflection on what Black Joy is](#) — and what it does.

Black Joy is an essential act of survival. And of development.

Brandy Factory, co-founder of Upset Homegirls, put it plainly: "Black Joy affirms that I am not a victim. I am an agent of change. It rejects the idea that violence, injustice, discrimination, prejudice, and dominance over others are normal and acceptable actions."

Enslaved Africans understood that they were not free. And yet they believed — they knew — that there were generations coming after them that would be free. That kind of empowering Black Joy gave them the will to hold on and press forward, no matter what confronted them.

Having a vision that circumvents adverse circumstances was, and is, an act of defiance and resilience.

Kleaver Cruz, founder of The Black Joy Project, said: "Black Joy is not dismissing or creating an alternate Black narrative that ignores the realities of our collective pain. Rather, it is about holding the pain and injustice in tension with the joy we experience — and using that joy as an entry into understanding the oppressive forces we navigate, as a means to imagine and create a world free of them."

Black Joy is an affirmation and an action. It is not escapism. It is not a fantasy. It is active acknowledgment that your reaction to even the most horrific encounter resides with you — and not someone else.

Black Joy is finding positive nourishment within self and others. It is a way of resting the body, mind, and spirit in the face of traumatic and life-altering racialized experiences that Black people continue to encounter.

So — bring on the Joy. Bring on the Black Joy.

A reading from “What is the point of joy when the world is so bad?” –by Rev. Lizzie McManus Dail.

Rev. McManus Dail is an Episcopal priest, feminist theologian, and vicar of Jubilee Church in Austin, TX. This excerpt is taken from [her Substack](#), where she writes about liberating faith from fear and reclaiming joy.

Never has the temptation toward cynicism or despair been stronger. Never has the time seemed riper to give up on hope — with climate disaster, brutally partisan politics, horrific warfare, and all the everyday but no less brutal losses and diagnoses and pain. What is the point of joy?

The point of joy is exactly because the world feels scary and sad and lonely.

We are not made for anger and isolation and fear. We are made for tender, gentle, joy-full connection — to God and to one another.

And this connection is precious, but not fragile. This world tried to kill God. And God sauntered right out of the grave and said: not today, Satan. *(But, like, really.)*

Joy is our resilience. Joy is why we fight. Joy is why we believe. Joy is what waits for us when we rest.

So protect joy — not by secreting it away or building walls around it — but by choosing joy, even and especially when you feel like you don't deserve it. Choose joy when the world wants to see your happiness as empty or cheap. Choose joy when the connection feels tender, but worthwhile.

After the collage of readings, allow for a moment of quiet contemplation.

Gospel Acclamation:

Choose a gospel acclamation that your congregation is familiar with and will sing along to. Some suggestions include:

- Alleluia! Raise the Gospel” by Bernadette Farrell and Owen Alstott
- “Resucitó (He Is Risen)” by Kiko Argüello
- “Alleluia! Give the Glory” from the Mass of Glory by Bob Hurd and Ken Canedo
- “Celtic Alleluia” by Christopher Walker

Gospel Proclamation:

John 20:1-18

The Inclusive Bible

There are several options for proclaiming the gospel: leader, reader, preacher, or as a dramatic reading. Before making any decisions, check with your preacher. They may want to proclaim it themselves to emphasize words or phrases that will enhance their preaching.

Proclaimer: A Reading from the Gospel According to John

On the first day of the week,

Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark,
and saw the stone removed from the tomb.

So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple and told them,

“They have taken the Rabbi from the tomb, and we don’t know where they put him.”

So Peter and the other disciple went out toward to the tomb.

They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first;
bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in.

When Simon Peter arrived after, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there,
and the cloth that had covered Jesus’ head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place.

Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first,
and saw and believed.

For they did not yet understand the scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.

Then the disciples returned home.

But Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping.

And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb and saw two angels in white sitting there,
one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been.

And they said to her, “Why are you weeping?”

She said to them, “They have taken my Rabbi, and I don’t know where they laid him.”

When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, “Why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?”

She thought it was the gardener and said, “Please, if you carried Jesus away,
tell me where you laid him, and I will take him.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary!”

She turned and said in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!,” which means my Teacher.

Jesus said to her, “Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to God.

But go to the sisters and brothers and tell them, ‘I am going to my Abba God and your Abba God.’”

Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Teacher,”
and what the savior told her.

The Good News of Our Salvation

Preaching or Shared Reflection

Your preacher can offer a reflection on any number of themes: Joy as resistance; the difference between joy and happiness; remaining attuned to suffering while maintaining hope; being called by name; the resilience of love.

If your community is accustomed to a shared reflection, some questions to reflect and share on may be:

- *Where is joy most needed in your life? In our world?*
- *How will/can you embrace and embody this joy?*

RITUAL ACTION: ANOINTING* AND EMBODIMENT

**If, for any reason, an anointing with oil is not feasible, we encourage you to use adapted ritual using water on the following pages instead. Do not use both.*

Invitation to personalization/reflection:

Leader: In the garden – where grief and love meet,
where creation itself bears witness to life –
Mary hears her name...

We, too stand in that garden –
between loss and new life,
between what has been and what is still becoming

Mary does not wait
for the world to be restored
before she proclaims Easter hope.

Her joy, embodied, becomes resistance.

Today we too are invited to embody a joy that resists:

*Where is joy most needed in your life? In our world?
How will/can you embrace and embody this joy?*

*If you already shared responses to these questions during the
preaching time, there is no need to repeat them. Otherwise, allow
for a moment of quiet contemplation before moving on.*

Blessing the oil:

Leader: *Invite all gathered to rise and extend their hands in blessing over the oil.*

Holy One,
Source of life and giver of all good gifts,

We bless you for this oil,
drawn from the abundance of the earth—
a sign of healing, strength, dignity, and delight.

In the Gospel,
Mary Magdalene remains in the garden,
grieving, loving, and listening—
until she is called by name
and sent to proclaim resurrection.

Bless this oil, we pray,
that it may be for us
a sign of that same calling.

As we are anointed,
remind us that we are known and beloved,
that our bodies are sacred,
that our voices matter.

Anoint us with courage,
anoint us with joy,
anoint us for resistance—

that we may proclaim with our lives
that love is stronger than death.

All: Amen.

*Any ministers who will assist with the anointing come forward
and the oil is poured from the larger vessel into smaller ones.*

*Then provide instructions appropriate to your space to those gathered about how
to proceed for the anointing.*

Words during the anointing: [Name], you are called by name.
Let your joy be resistance.

ADAPTED RITUAL USING WATER (IF NOT USING OIL)

This adaptation allows for participants to come forward to a central vessel and bless themselves with water or to remain standing while one or more ministers sprinkle the congregation. Please use whichever works best in your context.

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*Where is joy most needed in your life? In our world?
How will/can you embrace and embody this joy?*

*If you already shared responses to these questions during the
preaching time, there is no need to repeat them. Otherwise, allow
for a moment of quiet contemplation before moving on.*

Blessing the water

Leader: *Invite all gathered to rise and extend their hands in blessing over the
water.*

Holy One,
Source of life
and giver of every good gift,

We bless you for this water,
drawn from the abundance of the earth—
a sign of life, renewal, healing,
and the promise of new beginnings.

In the Gospel,
Mary Magdalene remains in the garden,
grieving, loving, and listening—
until she is called by name
and sent to proclaim resurrection.

Bless this water, we pray,
that it may be for us
a sign of that same calling.

(for sprinkling) As we are sprinkled with this water
(for individual blessing) As we bless ourselves in its touch,
renew in us the grace of our baptism.
Remind us that we are known and beloved,
that our bodies are sacred,
that our voices matter.

Wash away whatever keeps us
from living the fullness of your love.
Fill us with courage,
fill us with joy,
fill us with steadfast hope—
that we may proclaim with our lives
that love is stronger than death,
and that Christ is risen indeed.

Amen.

Words during the blessing:

(After everyone has been sprinkled):

Leader: Beloved in Christ, we are called by name.

All: May our joy be resistance.

(Or, as individuals bless themselves – consider leaving text near water):

Each: I am called by name. Let my joy be resistance.

Call and Response (for use following either oil or water):

Leader: We have been called by name.
We have been entrusted with joy.

Too often, joy has been denied, controlled, or dismissed—
especially among those pushed to the margins.

And still—joy rises.

Please respond **“is resistance”** while raising your fist in the air:

The joy that arises among the marginalized... **is resistance**

Black joy... **is resistance**

Queer joy... **is resistance**

Women’s joy... **is resistance**

Migrant joy... **is resistance**

The joy of the earth... **is resistance**

The song of the birds... **is resistance**

The blooming of creation... **is resistance**

Our joy... **is resistance**

Easter joy... **is resistance**

CONCLUDING RITES

Sending Forth:

Leader: Mary Magdalene was entrusted and sent—
embodying, carrying, sharing the first joyful proclamation of resurrection.

So too are we.

Go as she did—
trusting your voice,
claiming your call,
proclaiming what you have seen and heard.

Do not wait to be authorized.
The Risen Christ has already called your name.

Go into a world that obstructs joy—
and choose it anyway.

Go proclaiming in word and action:
that love is alive,
that justice is rising,
that resurrection is already unfolding.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Closing Song:

For the closing song, we recommend something familiar to the congregation to send them off embodying joy. Some suggestions in addition to those for the opening song include:

- "This Little Light of Mine" attributed to Harry Dixon Loes
- "How Can I Keep from Singing" ENDLESS SONG
- "Sing to the Mountains" by Bob Dufford, SJ
- "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee" HYMN TO JOY

Replace lyrics with inclusive/expansive language as appropriate.

Consider sending your congregation home with a tangible remembrance of this service. You might consider a flower. FutureChurch's in-person celebration will have painted stones with the words "Joy is resistance" on them for participants to take. A flower would be a nice symbol as well.