



Balloons Belong in Church  
April 12, 2026  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter  
Holy Humor Sunday  
Rev. Dr. Glenda Hollingshead  
John 20:19-31

In our gospel reading, the disciples aren't celebrating. They're not laughing. They're not throwing open the doors or passing out balloons. They're hiding. The doors are locked for fear is thick in the air. Then—without knocking, without waiting—Jesus shows up right in the middle of it all. And the first thing he says is, "Peace be with you." Then he does the most remarkable thing. He shows them his wounds. Think about that for a moment. The risen Christ, who still carries his scars of pain, appears to his disciples to offer peace. And then something shifts. The gospel tells us that the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Yes, joy broke loose in their midst.

Today is what we have come to call Holy Humor Sunday—this strange, beautiful tradition of celebrating the resurrection not only with reverence, but also with laughter and delight. Because if death doesn't get the last word—if fear doesn't get the last word—if even locked doors can't keep Christ out—then maybe, just maybe—joy belongs here; laughter belongs here; questions

belong here. Maybe even balloons belong here. With this in mind, I invite you to hear "Balloons Belong in Church," a poem by Ann Weems that dares to ask why we ever thought joy had to stay outside the walls of the church.

*I took to church one morning a happy four-year-old boy  
 Holding a bright blue string to which was attached  
 his much loved orange balloon with pink stripes...  
 Certainly a thing of beauty  
 And if not forever, at least a joy for a very important now.  
 When later he met me at the door  
 Clutching blue string, orange and pink bobbing behind him,  
 He didn't have to tell me something had gone wrong.  
 "What's the matter?"  
 He wouldn't tell me.  
 "I bet they loved your balloon..."  
 Out it came, then -- mocking the teacher's voice, "We don't bring balloons to church."  
 Then that little four-year old, his lip a little trembly, asked:  
 "Why aren't balloons allowed in church? I thought God would like balloons."  
 I celebrate balloons, parades and chocolate chip cookies.  
 I celebrate seashells and elephants and lions that roar.  
 I celebrate roasted marshmallows and chocolate cake and fresh fish.  
 I celebrate aromas: bread baking, mincemeat, lemons...  
 I celebrate seeing: bright colors, wheat in a field, tiny wild flowers...  
 I celebrate hearing: waves pounding, the rain's rhythm, soft voices...  
 I celebrate touching: toes in the sand, a kitten's soft fur, another person...  
 I celebrate the sun that shines slap dab in our faces...  
 I celebrate the crashing thunder and the brazen lightning...  
 And I celebrate the green of the world...the life-giving green...the hope-giving green...  
 I celebrate birth: the wonder...the miracle...of that tiny life already asserting its selfhood.  
 I celebrate children  
 who laugh out loud  
 who walk in the mud and dawdle in the puddles  
 who put chocolate fingers anywhere  
 who like to be tickled  
 who scribble in church  
 who whisper in loud voices  
 who sing in louder voices  
 who run...and laugh when they fall  
 who cry at the top of their lungs  
 who cover themselves with bandaids*

*who squeeze the toothpaste all over the bathroom  
who slurp their soup  
who chew coughdrops  
who ask questions  
who give us sticky, paste-covered creations  
who want their picture taken  
who won't use their napkins  
who bury goldfish, sleep with the dog, scream at their best friend  
who hug us in a hurry and rush outside without their hats.  
I celebrate children  
who are so busy living they don't have time for our hangups  
And I celebrate adults who are as little children.  
I celebrate the man who breaks up the meaningless routines of his life.  
The man who stops to reflect, to question, to doubt.  
The man who isn't afraid to feel...  
The man who refuses to play the game.  
I celebrate anger at injustice  
I celebrate tears for the mistreated, the hurt, the lonely...  
I celebrate the community that cares...the church...  
I celebrate the church.  
I celebrate the times when we in the church made it...  
When we answered a cry  
When we held to our warm and well-fed bodies a lonely world.  
I celebrate the times when we let God get through to our hiding places  
Through our maze of meetings  
Our pleasant facade...deep down to our selfhood  
Deep down to where we really are.  
Call it heart, soul, naked self  
It's where we hide  
Deep down away from God  
And away from each other.  
I celebrate the times when the church is the Church  
When we are Christians  
When we are living, loving, contributing...God's children...  
I celebrate that He calls us His children even when we are in hiding.  
I celebrate love...the moments when the You is more important than the I  
I celebrate the perfect love...the cross...the Christ  
loving in spite of...  
giving without reward  
I celebrate the music within a man that must be heard*

*I celebrate life...that we may live more abundantly...  
 Where did we get the idea that balloons don't belong in the church?  
 Where did we get the idea that God loves gray and Sh-h-h-h-h  
 And drab and anything will do?  
 I think it's blasphemy not to appreciate the joy in God's world.  
 I think it's blasphemy not to bring our joy into his church.  
 For God so loved the world  
 That he hung there  
 Loving the unlovable  
 What beautiful gift cannot be offered unto the Lord?  
 Whether it's a balloon or a song or some joy that sits within you waiting to  
 have the lid taken off.  
 The Scriptures say there's a time to laugh and a time to weep.  
 It's not hard to see the reasons for crying in a world where man's hatred for  
 man is so manifest.  
 So celebrate!  
 Bring your balloons and your butterflies, your bouquets of flowers...  
 Bring the torches and hold them high!  
 Dance your dances, paint your feelings, sing your songs, whistle, laugh.  
 Life is a celebration, an affirmation of God's love.  
 Life is distributing more balloons.  
 For God so loved the world...  
 Surely that's a cause for joy.  
 Surely we should celebrate!  
 Good News! That he should love us that much.  
 Where did we ever get the idea that balloons don't belong in the church?*

Friends, the good news for us today is this: even though the wounds of this world are still visible—Christ stands among us, speaking peace, breathing life, and turning trembling hearts into rejoicing ones. That's why balloons belong in church. That's why laughter belongs here. That's why joy belongs to us. Because resurrection is not quiet good news—it is life bursting forth from the grave. Christ is risen. He is risen, indeed. Surely, that's reason enough to celebrate. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.