

A livestreamed Easter

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By Kathryn Skelton Sun
Journal

April 5,
2020



Doretta Colburn, the minister of the Waterford Congregational Church, is going to be shooting an Easter message for her parishioners on her bison farm, with the Mahoosuc Mountains in the background. *Andree Kehn/Sun Journal*

WATERFORD — Doretta Colburn plans to shoot an Easter message for her Waterford Congregational Church parishioners standing somewhere outside on her bison farm, with the Mahoosuc Range behind her and, hopefully, the sun shining down and bison out of sight.

She and her husband have a herd of about 30 on a former dairy farm and the bison crept into the background of a recent sermon, which was “really cool watching them because they were prancing around,” but a bit distracting, Colburn said.

On any other Easter Sunday, 60 or more parishioners would have packed the church and filled it with music.

This year, robust alternate plans include Colburn's pre-recorded outdoor sermon and music director Jane Morse pre-recording a hymn at the Keoka Lake town beach at sunrise, posted to the [church's website](#).

Colburn anticipates her message will be "upbeat," embracing "all of the wonderful energy that we can get from nature."

Going to church, gathering around a ham dinner with family or enjoying a neighborhood egg hunt are out for Easter 2020.

Pandemic concerns and stay-at-home orders are driving makeshift plans, forcing families to figure out ways to celebrate together or separately, or inspiring private reflection.

"Easter to me is the best day of the year and it will be no different this year," said Linda Ellingwood of Norway. "I will read the account of the Resurrection in the Bible and reflect on the wonder and joy of that day."

Most years, she would have celebrated Easter with a sunrise service with friends followed by a large church breakfast, an even larger second service and dinner with 20 or so family members.

"Although life is altered this year, the special uniqueness of this day will never change," Ellingwood said.

Social distancing from even the Easter Bunny

Megan Spiller of Auburn had planned to dress up the family next weekend in new coordinated spring-colored outfits, take a family picture, head to the United Methodist Church for breakfast, choir practice and a service, then celebrate 8-month-old Ethan's first Easter with extended family.

Instead, she, her husband and Ethan will dress up and use the three-second delay on her laptop to take the family picture, stream the church service on Facebook, enjoy a small dinner and hopefully go for a walk.

She'll miss the usual traditions.



The Waterford Congregational Church will sit empty on Easter, in favor of a virtual holiday service. *Andree Kehn/Sun Journal*

"It's also the first Easter since my mom passed away (in October, from glioblastoma brain cancer) so not being with family stings a little bit more," Spiller said.

She's trying to focus on Ethan and how happy he's been that she's suddenly home a lot more the last month.

"I have made him an Easter basket and the Easter Bunny filled it before we had to social distance and not let anyone in the house," said Spiller. "Maybe we'll leave the plate with carrots for the Easter Bunny outside . . ."

Angela Ulmer, formerly of Bangor, now living on a boat in St. Petersburg, Florida, grabbed four miniature tin cans of ham at a local CVS to serve for her Easter meal after the grocery store ran out. It's one way she and the family are making do.

"This will be our first Easter ever to not see all of our kiddos — two of the six live onboard, the others are grown — but we are all in good spirits because we are all healthy," Ulmer said.

At Blais Flowers and Garden Center in Lewiston, owner Billie Jo Brito had been planning the 30th annual Easter egg hunt this year and hoping to go all out.

Now, she's thinking a delayed "spring fling" with crafts, activities, pets available for adoption and a scavenger hunt through the greenhouses in place of an Easter egg hunt, some time in May or June.

"It'll be a big deal, one because the stay-at-home (order) will have been lifted and the weather will be fabulous," said Brito.

She hasn't had time to think of her own personal Easter plans.

"Our greenhouses are in full bloom and we had to lay some people off — it's a matter of us doing the work of 10 people with two or three," Brito said. "But everything is coming along beautifully. Playing in the dirt, planting, is therapy. The plants don't care about the coronavirus."

Worshipping remotely



Doretta Colburn, the minister of the Waterford Congregational Church, checks on her bison at her family farm in Waterford. *Andree Kehn/Sun Journal*

Like many others, the Rev. Jodi Cohen Hayashida at the First Universalist Church in Auburn will be offering an Easter service that morning on Zoom, the internet service that offers video and audio conferencing.

When it comes to the pandemic, with everything changing so quickly, she isn't sure exactly what her sermon will be about that morning.

"We are trying to craft services that are responsive to the needs of the moment," said Hayashida. "That said, while this won't be our message during the service itself, leading up to Easter, I have seen many colleagues lifting up the idea that just as sanctuaries will be empty on Easter, so too was the tomb: The teachings of Easter are not about a location but rather about a way of being in the world — choosing love over hatred, justice over power, truth over fear. And we can do that anywhere."



Bison at Beech Hill Farm in Waterford will be the location of a virtual Easter service for the Waterford Congregational Church. *Andree Kehn/Sun Journal*

The Rev. Daniel Greenleaf said that everything involving Easter, including Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday will be livestreamed via Facebook.

His parish, the Prince of Peace Parish, includes the Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul, Holy Cross Church and Holy Family Church in Lewiston, Holy Trinity Church in Lisbon Falls, and Our Lady of the Rosary in Sabattus.

"For Easter, we'll be livestreaming using Facebook Live because lately, with all of the churches streaming at the same time on the same day, it's been overloading our system and crashing the website," Greenleaf said.

In Rumford, at the Holy Savior Parish, Father Nathan March said he'll be doing the Holy Week schedule "privately, but livestreaming it."

"The Vatican wants churches that can livestream to do it so people can participate at home at the same time," said March. "I'm not exactly sure what that will look like. I'm still trying to figure it out."

At Waterford Congregational Church, Moderator Alan Struck said that in addition to Colburn's sermon and the hymn from Morse, Morse and organist George Weiss will prerecord hymns to sing along to and there's also a video being compiled by parishioner Ginny Raymond.

“(Raymond) is going around the community to record clips of all the members of the congregation who will wave and greet their friends and show that they are OK and persevering,” said Struck. “The cool thing is we can look at this any time and as many times as we want to, to feel the fellowship and warmth of our members, near and far.”

Any other year, after celebrating with her church family, Colburn said she would have sat down to a dinner with her husband, her sister and her husband, her daughter’s family and two grandsons. They’re thinking of Zooming their meals this year, from each of their homes.

When it comes to filming her Easter sermon, she anticipates using traditional scriptures “because it is so (important) for people to hear those words, but I still will tweak the message to reflect where we’re at right now,” she said. “I always try to end it in hope. I think we just have to hold onto hope and that’s where we get our strength.”

Staff writer Matthew Daigle contributed to this story.



Chickens at Beech Hill Farm in Waterford. *Andree Kehn/Sun Journal*