

Early Easter morning

By [Lee Hull Moses](#)

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It's just after 6 a.m. when I pull into the church parking lot. It's still dark, and the steady rain makes me glad we decided to hold the sunrise service inside. I'm balancing a vase of daffodils for the communion table between my knees, and I'm hoping my good brown shoes are under the desk in my office, because they weren't under my bed at home.

I'm always early on Sunday mornings, but this is earlier than usual. The service doesn't start for another hour and a half, but I want to go over my sermon and make sure the table gets set up just right. I have coffee with me, but I don't really need it; I was wide awake as soon as my alarm went off, ticking through the details that need to be taken care of this morning, fueled by adrenaline and the anticipation of the day ahead.

The church is still when I unlock the door, stiller than usual—in contrast to the drumming of rain outside. Only the exit signs provide any light in the hall. The sanctuary is in shadow, too, but I can make out the cross at the front, draped in white and waiting to be dressed up by flowers at the early service. I was here when the decorating crew was hard at work yesterday; I've seen all this before. Still, I'm awestruck at the sight of it.

I walk a few steps down the center aisle, still holding the daffodils and my coffee cup, before I have to stop and just breathe it in. The lilies on the chancel and the streamers cascading from the ceiling are all shades of gray, but even in the dark, there is good news brilliantly proclaimed here. A silent alleluia, the resurrection at work again, without any help from me.

What a gift it is, I think, to be the first to the church on Easter morning.

I find my shoes, set up the table and run through my sermon a couple of times. It's getting lighter now, and I hear someone else coming in. The day is beginning. The

sanctuary will be full later, as full as it ever gets, with children in frilly dresses and uncomfortable shoes. The trumpet fanfare will call us into worship. We'll sing "Christ the Lord is Risen Today," and our voices will fill the space. The sun will be up by then, and even if the rain doesn't let up, the sanctuary will be bright and full of light.

But right now, in the shadowy stillness of early dawn, I can't help think about the women who came to the tomb with their spices.

It's different, of course. Unlike them, I know the end of the story. I know why the tomb is empty. I don't think their tale is so idle. But I wonder if their breath was taken away, like mine is, at the mystery and the beauty of it all.

What a gift it is to be given this story to tell.