

HOME SERVICE FOR EASTER SUNDAY 17th APRIL 2022

Welcome to this act of worship for Easter which is for you to use at home on your own or with others. If you have internet access, there are [links in blue to click on](#) to take you to the songs, Bible reading and a spoken version of today's message. I would recommend that you say the words of the service aloud, rather than read them silently to yourself – this really does help. Whatever you decide to do, spend this time with God, knowing that other people are sharing this service with you, but in different places. Rev. Alan Boyd



OPENING WORDS FROM JOHN 19:40-42

They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

A GATHERING HYMN AND AN EASTER GREETING

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words

["Now the Green Blade" \(CLICK FOR MUSIC\)](#)

**Now the green blade rises
from the buried grain,
Wheat that in the dark earth
many days has lain;
Love lives again,
that with the dead has been:
Love is come again,
like wheat that springs up green.**

(J. M. C. Crum)

Christ has died.	Amen !
Christ has is risen.	Hallelujah !
Christ will come again.	Praise God !

INTRODUCING OUR BIBLE READINGS

Mary Magdalene shares her discovery of the empty tomb with Peter and the beloved disciple, but they return home without a word to her.

They are off to work it out, but she stays, weeping, and meet the risen Jesus. So she must tell them, 'I have seen the risen Lord.'

OUR FIRST BIBLE READING:

[JOHN 20:1-10 \(CLICK HERE TO LISTEN\)](#)

The Resurrection of Jesus

¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there,⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

A HYMN OF PRAISE

["Good Christians all " \(CLICK FOR MUSIC\)](#)

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words

**1 Good Christians all, rejoice and sing!
Now is the triumph of our King!
To all the world glad news we bring:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**2 The Lord of Life is risen for ay;
Bring flowers of song to strew his way;
Let all the world rejoice and say:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**3 Praise we in songs of victory
That Love, that Life which cannot die,
And sing with hearts uplifted high:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**4 Your name we bless, O risen Lord,
And sing today with one accord
The life laid down, the Life restored:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

(C. A. Alington)

WE SHARE OUR EASTER GREETING AGAIN

Christ has died.	Amen !
Christ has is risen.	Hallelujah !
Christ will come again.	Praise God !

A PRAYER OF PRAISE AND CONFESSION

*Let's continue in worship as we pray together –
first of all, we lift our words of praise up to God:*

Glory to you, O God: you raised Jesus from the grave, bringing us victory over death and giving us eternal life.

Glory to you, O Christ: for us and for our salvation you overcame death and opened the gate to everlasting life.

Gory to you, O Holy Spirit: you lead us into the truth and breathe new life into us.

Glory to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and for ever. AMEN

Now, resting on God's grace and goodness, we offer our honest confession ...

Forgive us, Lord, that we do not always come to find you. Forgive us, because we are sometimes too scared, or too stubborn, to come to the tomb. Forgive us, because when we do meet Jesus, we don't always tell others what he has done for us.

(Take time now for your private confession)

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS AND THANKFULNESS

We are forgiven again. We are set free again.
So, we thank you Lord for: Easter blessings;

New life in Jesus; Clearness of vision;
Overcoming death; Unending love; Nearness
of Jesus; Trusting in him; Everlasting glory;
Redeeming the world. AMEN

FOR OUR YOUNGER PEOPLE

Happy Easter! The story of Easter is told in a few different ways in the Bible. Today we're going to look at the story we read in the book of John. Mary Magdalene is the first to go to the tomb where Jesus had been laid after he had died on the cross. She expects to find Jesus lying there, but she – and everyone else - are in for a big, big surprise. Have a go at the activity sheet at the bottom of these pages and see what you think.

WE SING PRAYERFULLY AS WE PREPARE OURSELVES TO THINK ABOUT OUR READINGS (STF 294 "All you that seek the Lord who died)

This great hymn by Charles Wesley takes the encounter between the risen Jesus and Mary Magdalene from today's Bible reading – JOHN 20:1-18 and especially JOHN 20:15 - and makes it the search by all believers.

["All you that seek" \(CLICK FOR MUSIC\)](#)

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words

- 1 All you that seek the Lord who died,
Your God for sinners crucified,
Now, now let all your grief be o'er!
Believe, and you shall weep no more.**
- 2 The Lord of life is risen indeed,
To death delivered in your stead;
His rise proclaims your sins forgiven,
And shows the living way to heaven.**
- 3 Haste then, you souls that first believe,
Who dare the gospel word receive,
Your faith with joyful hearts confess,
Be bold, be Jesus' witnesses.**
- 4 Go, tell the followers of your Lord
Their Jesus is to life restored;
He lives to quicken humankind;
He lives, that all his life may find.**

(Charles Wesley)

A REFLECTION ON THE READING

[TODAY'S MESSAGE \(CLICK TO WATCH/LISTEN\)](#)

What did you really want to be when you grew up? Did you manage it, or did life take you somewhere different? I'm clearly NOT a train driver. Our son is a teacher, and a great teacher at that. It's a real calling, but it wasn't always like that. When he was just a lad, he went through a ton of ideas about what he wanted to be. The one that sticks in my mind was a total conviction that he wanted to be a WWF Professional Wrestler. He had all the videos, magazines, and figures to go with it.

That one ran for months and months, and we just couldn't steer him off the track. I was starting to panic, but my wife Ashley played it cool, left it, and the idea just went off the boil, praise the Lord. David Letterman, the American chat-show host had something pretty funny to say about that in a wider setting. He said: "America is the only country where a significant proportion of the population believes that professional wrestling is real but the moon landing was faked."

Well, it made me chuckle. It's not just about America. In an era that loves conspiracy theories, when we're bombarded with information and struggle to tell fake news from the truth, I want to ask you – well, I ask myself as well – what do you REALLY think of Easter, the Easter story, and the resurrection of Jesus that we celebrate today? Just a good memorable yarn? An encouraging story? The literal truth? A load of old nonsense? The bodily resurrection – the revival of a crucified Christ?

What do you REALLY think? Is it something that defies all logic and doesn't really hold water? Something we stand or fall by? A tangible spiritual life changing experience of the Christ? The core of our faith? What do you REALLY think? Is it a parable or a metaphor for an eternal truth? A real encounter with God? The breaking-in of the Kingdom? I'm sure that you and I could go on and on with this and think up many more questions and assertions about this Easter experience.

Now if you are, or always have been definite, secure and confident with a cast-iron belief about Easter and the resurrection of Jesus - that's great. Really great. But I suspect that if

we're honest, we have had, and are having, and probably will always have questions about it all, and sometimes even real doubts. That's healthy and normal. Pope John Paul the Second once said something like: "If a faith is alive and kicking, it ought to be at least kicking". We're not cocooned in an unchanging faith or cocooned against the realities of life.

We're always going to wonder, question, defend, test, step out of our comfort zone, push back, hold onto some ideas, feel unsettled at times, change in other ways, worry, are assured, be vulnerable, be shaped by some things and reject others, feel helpless, find strength, look back at where we've come from and what has shaped us, express our humanity and live out our faith together and experience life in the present reality and look to the future with different eyes.

These are all things that we're living through ourselves just now, but we also see in the gospel reading we're looking at today. Matthew. offers yet another version of the resurrection story. The details in the 4 gospels all differ. They all offer a slightly different view, a different memory, a different emphasis from each other, but they all agree on one thing - in the early morning of the 3rd day, a group of women make a risky journey to the grave of their leader. They come to clean and dress and embalm a cold, broken body. Instead, they find the tomb empty. It's absolutely not what anyone expects.

That sense of being on a risky journey and meeting the totally unexpected is something that we're all very familiar with ourselves, aren't we? Who would have predicted the past 2 or 3 years? The uncertainty and impact of our place in Europe and the world? A world-wide health pandemic that's not over yet but has had such an effect on every single aspect of our lives, mental wellbeing, health, just being alive itself, economy, jobs, security, leaving us feeling imprisoned, fearful and uncertain. In a sort of tomb. Perhaps our own experiences are ones of bad health, isolation, loss or grief.

Our environment in meltdown with warning after warning after warning. An energy crisis. A cost of living that's going way, way beyond most people's ability to keep up with it, and no end in sight. Food banks being the norm. Fuel poverty, food poverty and actual poverty increasing. A style and ethos and competence and priorities

and thrust of government that few can be happy with. Whatever happened to decent, sensible, stable, welcoming Britain?

And now in 21st century Europe, a vicious, brutal and merciless war in a European nation, as Russia attacks Ukraine and millions of people flee, adding to the millions already fleeing other conflicts and regimes around the world. How did we get here? It feels like a very, very, very long Good Friday with many - and much - crucified. And all, and everyone, trapped in a tomb.

In Matthew's story, as the women make that risky journey to Jesus' grave, they and all the followers are at a real low point. Shocked, bewildered, frightened, lost. Not understanding. In fact, in the first part of the story, when they find the tomb empty, they just go home. It's a mystery.

In verses 11-18 Mary Magdalene, is aghast when two 2 angels, sitting on the grave, speak to her and ask her why she's weeping. She turns, and not recognising him at first, finds herself looking at and talking to Jesus.

Fear, shock and grief give way to the beginning of faith in new life. She can't hold onto her friend. He's not the same. And soon those who believe, those who follow and live out God's mission will not be the same. This is the beginning of something new and dramatic. Mary is asked to tell the others what she has seen and heard. "I have seen the Lord". What's important here is that it's unfinished business.

Yes, Matthew and the other Gospel writers stress the empty grave. The stone rolled away. The absent body. Something we Christians have remembered and celebrated and emphasised ever since. But Matthew is careful - very careful - to show that the empty tomb on its own is not a good enough basis for a resurrection faith.

There could be lots of reasons for a missing body. Stolen by his followers to keep the story going. Stolen by the authorities to prevent it being a focus for ferment and resistance. Taken by his family to a private spot. Not here in the first place. And so on and so on. But "hang on" - say Matthew, and Mark, and Luke and John in their own way - just "hang on".

Apart from the questions that you might have, and apart from the statements of these witnesses, it takes more than an empty tomb if

we are to have a resurrection faith. This has to be the starting point, not the end of an era. This has to be the continuing unfolding of the story. Jesus' own prophetic words (Luke 24:7) that he would be) "Handed over crucified and rise again" are the first step into something more. A sign that this is all unfinished.

Perhaps this is the most important thing, the greatest encouragement and strength that we can take away from this story, and this amazing Easter morning. That this is unfinished business. God is not finished with humanity. God has not given up on us. God has not given up on our present times or our futures. Neither must we, no matter how hard it is to hold on to that.

When we say at Christmas: "Emmanuel - God is with us" - God, and we, mean it. It really comes to life - literally - at Easter. It's not only Jesus who can - and will - rise to new life from today and from now on.

When Mary Magdalene said to the others: "I have seen the Lord", she had also had the first sight, not just of a resurrected Christ, but also the first sight of a new experience of God active in, and with, and through his people, and first sight of a new Kingdom, and first sight of a new mission to make that kingdom real, and first sight of new possibilities.

Unfinished business. New possibilities and unfinished business for the Ukraine, for Russia and certainly for President Putin. Resurrection. Unfinished business and new possibilities for our nation and our partnerships with some countries, while standing up against other unjust regimes and leaders. Resurrection.

Unfinished business and new possibilities for the ethos of our nation and communities, with compassion in how we welcome and care for those in need, support for the overlooked, lifting up those who can't manage or face massive uncertainty and anxiety. Maybe we count ourselves among them. Resurrection.

Unfinished business and new possibilities for us as a Church or Churches. Yes, looking back at where we've come from and what has shaped us, but expressing our humanity, and living out our faith together and experiencing life in the best way in the present reality, and looking to the future with different eyes. Resurrection.

Unfinished business and new possibilities for each one of us as we slowly find our feet, live as best we can with our vulnerability, and in our own lives and relationships in 1001 small ways live life more fully and more hopefully. Resurrection.

Conspiracy theory? Fake news? What do you and I REALLY make of Easter? As Mary said - I think that we have seen the Lord. I think that we have seen the kingdom. And with our amazing God in us and with us, I think that we have we have seen the next step. AMEN

A HYMN TO STEP INTO THE LIGHT OF EASTER (Singing the Faith 292 "After darkness, light")

While it might be an unfamiliar Easter hymn, the meaningful words and the beautiful gentle tune work together to make this really special.

["After darkness, light" \(CLICK FOR MUSIC\)](#)

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words ...

- 1 After darkness, light; After winter, spring;
After dying, life: Alleluia! Alleluia!**
- 2 Take his body down; Lay it in the tomb;
Love has overcome: Alleluia! Alleluia!**
- 3 Turn away in grief; Turn away in faith;
Celebrate his death: Alleluia! Alleluia!**
- 4 Come whatever may God will have his way:
Welcome Easter Day! Alleluia! Alleluia!**
(Fred Pratt Green)

A PERSONAL PRAYER

In Lent we have come with Jesus through darkness into light. We have walked with him on his journey. Now we want to run with him into his wonderful, everlasting life. Lead us, good Lord. Amen.

OUR SECOND BIBLE READING:

[JOHN 20:11-18 \(CLICK HERE TO LISTEN\)](#)

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb,¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do

not know where they have laid him.' ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' ¹⁶Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." ' ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD

You may want to have a time of silence in which you recall, or to pray out loud for our world, people, places or situations, those around us and our own needs. You may want to use the prayers below or have them guide your thoughts:

Lord, we hear of so many things that frighten us just now, and we experience our own moments of deep sadness. We pray for the world – our world and your world. Hold back the hands of hate, and establish peace in our hearts: where there is terror, may your comfort reign; where there is mourning, may hope rise again.

There are many places in the world where people are crying out in pain and fear: God of resurrection glory, draw near. There are many people who are struggling with illness or sadness, with loss or worry: God of resurrection glory, draw near. There are many times when we are perplexed and fearful because we cannot see what happens next: God of resurrection glory, draw near.

May we know the reality of Easter hope in our lives today. May we know the healing power of the Holy Spirit, and may we live in the power of that Spirit today and always. In the name of the risen Christ. AMEN

We share in the prayer that Jesus gave us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Do not bring us to the time of trial
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. AMEN.**

WE SHARE OUR EASTER GREETING A FINAL TIME

Christ has died.	Amen !
Christ has is risen.	Hallelujah !
Christ will come again.	Praise God !

OUR FINAL HYMN, (Singing the Faith 309 "See what a morning")

["See what a morning" \(CLICK FOR MUSIC\)](#)

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words ...

- 1 See what a morning, gloriously bright
with the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;
folded the graveclothes,
tomb filled with light
as the angels announce Christ is risen!
See God's salvation plan,
wrought in love, borne in pain,
paid in sacrifice,
fulfilled in Christ the man,
for he lives; Christ is risen from the dead.**
- 2 See Mary weeping, 'Where is he laid!'
as in sorrow she turns
from the empty tomb;
hears a voice speaking, calling her name;
it's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!
The voice that spans the years,
speaking life, stirring hope,
bringing peace to us,
will sound till he appears,
for he lives; Christ is risen from the dead.**
- 3 One with the Father, Ancient of Days,
through the Spirit
who clothes faith with certainty,
honour and blessing, glory and praise
to the King crowned with power
and authority!**

**And we are raised with him,
death is dead, love has won,
Christ has conquered;
and we shall reign with him,
for he lives; Christ is risen from the dead.**

(Stuart Townend & Keith Getty)

A PRAYER OF BLESSING

On this Easter day: go in peace, in the knowledge of God's power; On this Easter day: go in confidence, in the knowledge of God's strength; And always: go in joy, in the knowledge of God's love. AMEN

Some prayers and hymns are taken from, based on, or inspired by, those in 'Roots' and 'Companion to the Revised Common Lectionary' 'Hymns are used by permission under CCL.

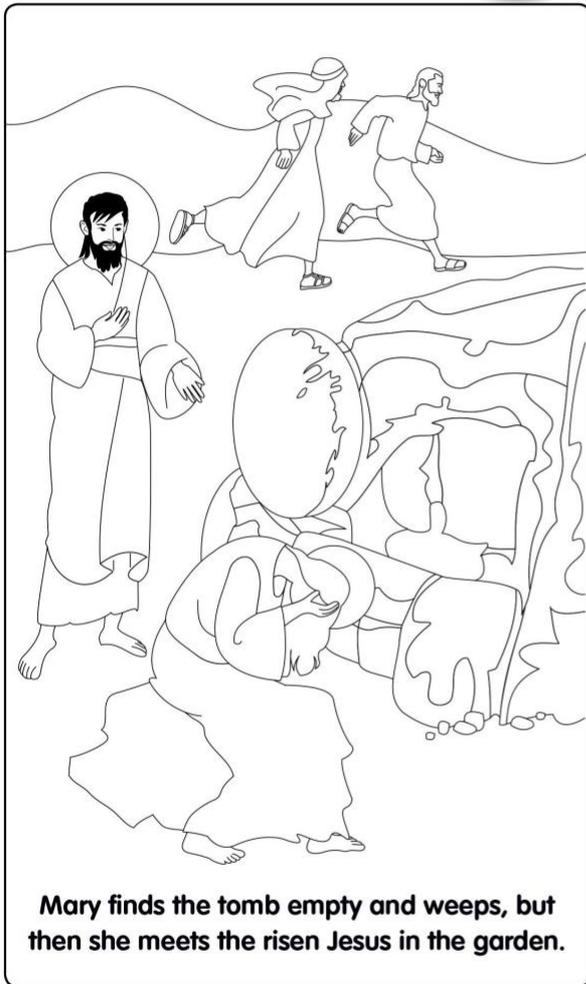
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Today's Bible reading

John 20.1-18

Mary Magdalene and two disciples discover the empty tomb. Mary weeps in the garden, then meets the risen Lord Jesus.



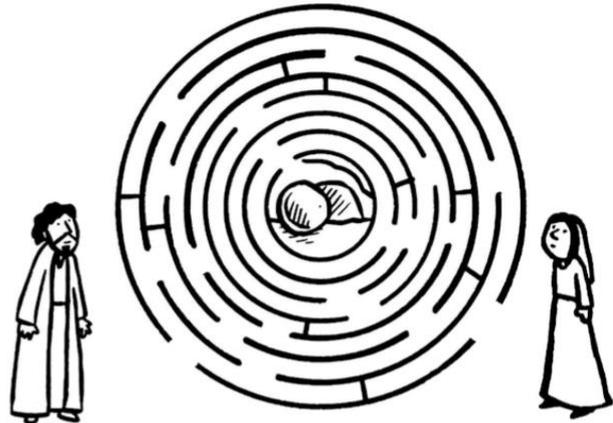
Mary finds the tomb empty and weeps, but then she meets the risen Jesus in the garden.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus,
help us to tell people that you are alive.
May we be your witnesses
in the world.
Amen.

Activity 1

Can you help Mary find her way to the tomb and then out again to find Jesus and tell the others?



Activity 2

Find the words from the story in the word search.

e	n	o	t	s	w	b	m	o	t
p	g	q	r	u	b	r	z	e	o
z	y	c	e	c	l	e	h	v	n
g	k	l	t	u	v	n	a	i	c
t	z	o	e	s	l	e	g	n	a
n	r	t	p	o	t	d	n	e	r
g	n	h	o	j	h	r	f	e	t
j	e	s	u	s	n	a	f	q	g
c	r	y	i	n	g	g	s	t	w
t	v	m	a	r	y	w	r	g	m

Mary
tomb
stone
Peter
John
cloths
crying
angels
gardener
Jesus

Live in faith

Look for signs of new life around you this week, e.g. a tree full of leaves, spring flowers, birds with food in their beaks, lambs, a baby.

Check it out

The First Easter, Lois Rock & Sophie Allsopp, Lion Children's Books.