

## HOME SERVICE FOR EASTER SUNDAY 9<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2023

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 ISAIAH 42:1-4

<sup>1</sup>Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. <sup>2</sup>He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; <sup>3</sup>a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. <sup>4</sup>He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

### A GATHERING HYMN AND AN EASTER GREETING

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

#### ["He is Lord, he is Lord" \(CLICK FOR MUSIC\)](#)

He is Lord, he is Lord;  
he is risen from the dead and he is Lord;  
every knee shall bow, every tongue confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Come, worship the God of wonders, of majesty and might. Come, worship the God who defeats the darkness, and rolls away the stone. Alleluia! Christ is risen!

### A HYMN OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING (STF 298 "Christ the Lord is risen today")

#### ["Christ the Lord is risen" \(CLICK FOR MUSIC\)](#)

(We'll sing the first 3 verses of this great Easter hymn, returning to the other verses later).

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

- 1 Christ the Lord is risen today;  
*Alleluia!*  
All creation joins to say:  
*Alleluia!*  
Raise your joys and triumphs high;  
*Alleluia!*  
Sing, you heavens; let earth, reply:  
*Alleluia!*
- 2 Love's redeeming work is done,  
*Alleluia!*  
Fought the fight, the battle won;  
*Alleluia!*  
Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;  
*Alleluia!*  
Christ has burst the gates of hell:  
*Alleluia!*
- 3 Lives again our glorious king;  
*Alleluia!*  
Where, O death, is now your sting?  
*Alleluia!*  
Once he died our souls to save;  
*Alleluia!*  
Where's your victory, boasting grave?  
*Alleluia!*

(Charles Wesley)

### A PRAYER OF EASTER PRAISE

Lord, we praise you. All we have comes from you. You are the resurrection and the life. We worship and adore you.

You are the God who brings life from death, hope from despair, beauty from ashes and flesh to dry bones. Thank you that you include us in your great promise, that you offer us a fresh start and a new beginning – a life following you.

Thank you for the precious gift of your Spirit in our lives. Help us to listen to your prompting within us, strengthening us when our faith is tested, when we are tempted to take a different path and behave in a way that does not honour you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## INTRODUCING OUR BIBLE READING

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*When it comes to the Easter story, the details in the 4 gospels differ. While all stress the empty grave, the stone rolled away, and the absent body - each offers a slightly different view, a different memory, and a different emphasis from the others. In today's reading from John, where Mary Magdalene shares her discovery of the empty tomb with the disciples, the author is careful - very careful - to show that the empty tomb on its own is not a good enough basis for a resurrection faith.*

### OUR BIBLE READING:

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

#### The Resurrection of Jesus

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<sup>1</sup>Early 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. <sup>2</sup>So 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.' <sup>3</sup>Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb.

<sup>4</sup>The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

<sup>5</sup>He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup>Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there,<sup>7</sup>and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup>Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;<sup>9</sup>for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup>Then the disciples returned to their homes.

## A TIME OF CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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*Let's offer our honest confession ...*

*(Pause for a few moments)*

Lord, you are risen, yet we doubt you. Lord have mercy. Christ, you appear to us, but we fail to notice. Christ, have mercy. Glorious Lord of life, have mercy on us. Have mercy on us.

*(Take time now for your private confession)*

This is the good news in Jesus Christ; God loves us more than we love ourselves. God forgives us, encourages us, and frees us to love others. Thanks be to God. Amen.

## WE RETURN TO OUR HYMN OF PRAISE AS WE PREPARE TO THINK ABOUT OUR READING (STF 298 "Christ the Lord is risen today")

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["Soar we now" \(CLICK FOR MUSIC\)](#)

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

**4 Soar we now where Christ has led,**

*Alleluia!*

**Following our exalted head;**

*Alleluia!*

**Made like him, like him we rise;**

*Alleluia!*

**Ours the cross, the grave, the skies:**

*Alleluia!*

**5 King of glory! Soul of bliss!**

*Alleluia!*

**Everlasting life is this,**

*Alleluia!*

**You to know, your power to prove,**

*Alleluia!*

**Thus to sing, and thus to love:**

*Alleluia!*

*(Charles Wesley)*

## A REFLECTION ON THE READING

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

The joke goes - What's the difference between an egg and a load of chocolate? Easy. You can beat an egg, but you just can't beat a load of chocolate. Today, I intend to have the best of both worlds - chocolate Easter eggs - loads of them ... I hope. We all know why we have eggs at Easter. A symbol of a tomb broken open and of new life. A symbol of something that isn't over and is about to start off again.

I may have shared this with a few of you before, but as 1999 was coming to an end and the year 2000 was about to begin, I happened to listen in on a good, simple, prize-free competition that was on the radio. It was on a programme called "Broadcasting House" on Radio 4. The task was very straightforward. All you had to do was come up with a single word that summed up the 20th century. That's all. But there was a twist, a catch. The one word you couldn't use was UNFINISHED.

Now I never did find out the result, but I wonder what the word was. I wonder what word you'd use? You might have a positive thought. Or maybe the latter years of the past millenium, the century so far, the past few years or maybe even this year haven't been so good for you. Perhaps the future is uncertain or dark. So what word would you use? The more I thought about it, the more I thought it would have to be the one word you weren't allowed to use - UNFINISHED.

Although it mightn't have been obvious to the disciples at the time, UNFINISHED is a word that could be used about the story of Good Friday that's just passed. Beginning with the conviction, and beating and mocking of Jesus, then Jesus is led away to be crucified. And when you and I and those we care about are struggling and suffering, we too ask "Is that all there is?"

UNFINISHED is definitely a word we could use about Peter's denial that he even knew Jesus, and the times when you and I keep our heads down when we know we should stand up and be counted. A sense of UNFINISHED business hangs over the very story of Jesus' crucifixion.

UNFINISHED is definitely a word that should be used about the Easter story in John. He offers another version of it. The details in the 4 gospels all differ. Each offers a slightly different view or 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.

In John's story, they're shocked. Confused. Frightened. Disbelieving. Mary's taken aback, to say the least, when two strange figures speak to her and ask her why she's weeping. She's completely gobsmacked, astounded, when a figure she doesn't at first recognise as Jesus asks her the same question and then says – don't try to hold on to me, for this isn't over yet. Fear and

shock and astonishment give way to the beginning of faith in new life. What's important here is that it's UNFINISHED.

'Hang on' - says John and the other Gospel writers in their own way - hang on. Apart from the questions you might have – and there are plenty - and apart from what these witnesses say, 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 continued unfolding of the story.

This isn't a story safely frozen and locked away in the Bible, or marked by a few chocolate eggs, or a bit of fun around an Easter Bunny. This has to make a difference to you and me and our world right here and right now – in the middle of a terrible war in the Ukraine. Iraq 20 years after its war and Afghanistan 2 years on. The Yemen, Syria. Massive tension and worrying sabre-rattling between China, Russia and the West. Upheaval in the Middle East.

The twists, turns, toxicity and heartlessness that seems to permeate our politics and law-making and some law-keeping. Health and illness. Genuine and rising poverty – financial, child, energy, family, food. The mortgage trap. Fear of losing our homes. A poverty of hope and purpose. Death and life. Social care in a state of collapse and our NHS on its uppers with its wonderful staff just worn out.

For most of us, there's a general feeling of being overwhelmed and frightened. It's even worse for refugees with no safe route to asylum in the UK who are trapped and wither away in Calais and take life threatening risks to be free. What about the business of finding or keeping work, making the money stretch, loneliness, raising families, and what really goes on in our homes, heads, hearts and lives?

The 20th century - the whole millennium - human life and experience that spanned that millennium into this one, and into this century - it's unfinished. We don't just breath a sigh of relief and say it's dusted and done. There's more to it than a chance to mark the end of one batch of 100 or 1000 or 2000 years. What's next?

I guess that's a question we could also ask in the church in general. What's next? And a question we could ask as we try to journey forward together in our national Church, in our city, Circuit, and local Church. For us as people of

faith, as individuals, young , old, as neighbours, as citizens - as we don't give up on a confused, confusing, needy, frightening, exciting glorious world that's also full of possibilities - as we don't give up on each other, or our neighbourhood, or ourselves. What's next? Anything is possible – especially with God alongside us, right in the middle of things with us.

A fair few years ago we had a special Easter event for a Village school in the Methodist Church. In the previous weeks, nudged along by the Vicar and myself, we made things together in class to present and tell the Easter story.

We painted and drew. Sang, listened, told stories, decorated. One of the groups was asked to dramatise the Easter story. Written in their own words and acted in their own way. It was direct and simple, but what a punch line! I've never forgotten it.

Towards the end of their script, the risen Jesus says to the women "I have a job for you. Tell the rest of my friends that I'm alive. Tell them I will meet them on the sea shore in Galilee." Then the women all speak together. And you'll never guess what it is that they say in our children's play. They simply say: "That's where it all began." That's where it all began. Out of the mouths of babes and children comes wisdom and challenge indeed. AMEN.

### **WE SING OF THAT CHALLENGE & CONFIDENCE (STF 296 "Christ has risen while earth slumbers")**

*This is likely to be a new hymn to you in our hymn book from the Iona Community. The words are so apt. The set tune - 'Transformation' - is simple and beautiful, but it can also be easily sung to 'Scarlet Ribbons'. Try it and see what you think.*

#### **"Christ has risen" (CLICK FOR SET TUNE)**

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

- 1. Christ has risen while earth slumbers,  
Christ has risen where hope died,  
as he said and as he promised,  
as we doubted and denied.  
Let the moon embrace the blessing;  
let the sun sustain the cheer;  
let the world confirm the rumour.  
Christ is risen, God is here!**

- 2. Christ has risen for the people  
whom he died to love and save;  
Christ has risen for the women  
bringing flowers to grace his grave  
Christ has risen for disciples  
huddled in an upstairs room.  
He whose word inspired creation  
can't be silenced by the tomb.**
- 3. Christ has risen to companion  
former friends who fear the night,  
sensing loss and limitation  
where their faith had once burned bright.  
They bemoan what is no longer,  
they expect no hopeful sign  
till Christ ends their conversation,  
breaking bread and sharing wine.**
- 4. Christ has risen and forever  
lives to challenge and to change  
all whose lives are messed or mangled,  
all who find religion strange.  
Christ is risen. Christ is present  
making us what he has been -  
evidence of transformation  
in which God is known and seen.**

*(John L Bell and Graham Maule)*

### **PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD**

When we are all despairing; when the world is full of grief, when we see no way ahead, and hope has gone away: roll back the stone.

*(A time for your prayers for our world)*

Although we fear changes; although we are not ready; although we'd rather weep and run away: roll back the stone.

*(Your prayers for people, places or situations)*

Because we're coming with the women; because we hope where hope is vain; because you call us from the grave and show the way: roll back the stone.

*(Your prayers for those around us and our own needs)*

*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.

#### WORDS TO SEND US ONWARDS FROM EASTER

We come now to the Risen One. We lift our eyes to see him. We recognise his glory. We thank him for all he has done. **Amen.**

#### OUR FINAL HYMN FOR EASTER DAY, (StF 313 "Thine be the glory")

*What other way can we end our time of Easter worship but to sing the words of the great hymn "Thine be the glory" by Edmond Budry to the truly stirring music that we all love by Handel:*

["Thine be the glory" \(CLICK FOR MUSIC\)](#)

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

1. **Thine be the glory,  
risen, conquering Son,  
endless is the victory  
thou o'er death hast won;  
Angels in bright raiment  
rolled the stone away,  
kept the folded grave-clothes  
where thy body lay:**

*Thine be the glory,  
risen, conquering Son,  
Endless is the victory  
thou o'er death hast won;*

2. **Lo, Jesus meets us,  
risen from the tomb;  
lovingly he greets us,  
scatters fear and gloom;  
Let the church with gladness  
hymns of triumph sing:  
for her Lord now liveth,  
death hath lost its sting:**

*Thine be the glory,  
risen, conquering Son,  
Endless is the victory  
thou o'er death hast won;*

3. **No more we doubt thee,  
glorious Prince of Life;  
life is nought without thee:  
aid us in our strife;  
make us more than conquerors  
through thy deathless love;  
Bring us safe through Jordan  
to thy home above:**

*Thine be the glory,  
risen, conquering Son,  
Endless is the victory  
thou o'er death hast won;*

*(Edmond Budry)*

#### A BLESSING

On this Easter day and always ... Go in hope, the risen Lord goes before you. Go in peace, the risen Lord goes with you. Go in love, the risen Lord lives within you. Amen.

*Some prayers are taken from, based on, or inspired by, those in "Flames of the Spirit", "Roots" and "Companion to the Lectionary". Hymns are used by permission under CCL*

