

Christ Church Easter Sunday, 17 April 2022

We have three excellent reasons to celebrate today – for the first time since I became your minister, we are celebrating Easter in the church, the last two years we have been in lockdown and worshipping only online; today we are welcoming into membership three new members and giving thanks for the lives of Aisha and Arya; and finally and most importantly:

Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

Let us worship the Risen Lord!

Call to worship

Hold your head high, Christ has risen.
Rejoice and shout,
Christ has come calling us home.
Home to the heart of God,
Home to God's living presence,
Home to God's banquet feast.

Hold your head high, Christ has risen.
Death has been conquered,
Christ has come calling us home.
All that was broken has been made whole,
All that was disconnected has been set right,
All that was oppressed has been set free.

Hold your head high, Christ has risen,
Redemption is complete,
God's eternal world has begun,
Love reigns over all,
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah,
Christ has risen calling us home.

written by Christine Sine

Hymn Christ the Lord is Risen today R&S 232

1 'Christ, the Lord, is risen today!' *Hallelujah!*
All creation join to say: *Hallelujah!*
Raise your joys and triumphs high; *Hallelujah!*
Sing, you heavens, and earth reply: *Hallelujah!*

2 Love's redeeming work is done!
Fought the fight, the battle won:
lo, our Sun's eclipse is o'er,
lo, he sets in blood no more.

3 Vain the stone, the watch, the seal:
Christ has burst the gates of hell;
death in vain forbids him rise
Christ has opened paradise:

4 Lives again our glorious King;
where, O death, is now your sting?
Once he died, our souls to save;
where's your victory, boasting grave?

5 Soar we now where Christ has led,
following our exalted Head;
made like him, like him we rise;
ours the cross, the grave, the skies:

6 Hail the Lord of earth and heaven!
Praise to you by both be given;
thee we greet triumphant now,
hail, the Resurrection Thou!

Children Time

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Hymn Let us build a house Red folder 54

Let us build a house
Where love can dwell
And all can safely live
A place where
Saints and children tell
How hearts learn to forgive

Built of hopes and dreams and visions
Rock of faith and vault of grace
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions

*All are welcome, all are welcome
All are welcome in this place*

Let us build a house where prophets speak
And words are strong and true
Where all God's children dare to seek
To dream God's reign anew

Here the cross shall stand as witness
And a symbol of God's grace
Here as one we claim the faith of Jesus

*All are welcome, all are welcome
All are welcome in this place*

Let us build a house where love is found
In water, wine and wheat
A banquet hall on holy ground
Where peace and justice meet

Here the love of God, through Jesus
Is revealed in time and space
As we share in Christ the feast that frees us

*All are welcome, all are welcome
All are welcome in this place*

Offering including Lent Collection for Water Aid and gifts of eggs

We say the Grace as the children go to Sunday Club

Opening prayer

We are not eye-witnesses to an event, as were Mary and the disciples;
we have not journeyed through a dangerous city
to seek answers or consolation; we have not seen angels
gathering at the start of the day,
or wept in the garden this morning because we could not find Him.

But we are here to attest to a story that has not lost its power
during twenty centuries of change and conflict.

We are here because those before us carried this story as if it were precious gold;
cherished it as if it were the key to a hidden wisdom.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, take your places today in celebration and in awe.

What you are about to hear again, has the capacity to change the world.

Your very presence attests to the rising up of life
from the tomb of despair, and to the uncontrollable power of God. Amen

written by Ann Siddall

Bible readings: John 20:1-18

Acts 10:34-43

Mary Magdalene was caught unawares by Jesus in the garden. She was not expecting to see him, or ever hear his voice again. She thought he was the gardener. It was only when he said her name that she knew who he was. That is how we should be on Easter morning – although we have heard the Easter story many times, depending on your age and how regularly you attend church, maybe 50 to 80 times or even more – this story is so amazing that we should be surprised and overwhelmed by it every time we hear it. Our Lord, who was brutally killed, tortured and humiliated on a cross, buried in a cave, is alive again.

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I was watching a video this week, called Talking Absolute Worship, which the husband of our Synod Moderator Lythan, produces every week with four ministers talking about the lectionary readings for Sunday. Lythan was talking about this passage and how Mary says, 'I have seen the Lord' and how that is really all we need to know. We can't explain the resurrection, but if we feel the resurrection in our lives, we should do like Mary, say I have seen the Lord and I want to tell you about it. I want to tell you about the difference that has made in my life. We should live as resurrection people, full of hope, and show that we have 'seen' the Lord in everything we do. Lythan went on to quote Rowan Williams, saying - the believer shows Jesus as the centre of his or her life. Do we do that? Do we really act all the time as though Jesus is the centre of our lives? As though the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important thing to us?

This year's Lent House Group was about how we are all equal before God, all made in God's image, or as we heard Peter say in Acts 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality'. God is not interested in our human distinctions of race, gender, intellect or social standing. Jesus came to tear down those distinctions. He did not enter Jerusalem on a mighty horse with a conquering army, he entered on the colt of a donkey. He turned society and its standards on its head. In the House Group material, we heard how when Muslims go to the mosque to pray, they are obliged to kneel in the next available space, next to the person who knelt before them. They are not allowed to start a new row, or sit wherever they want, or sit with their friends or people they know. This is an expression of the fact that within the mosque all social distinctions fade away, everyone is to be treated as a friend, a brother or sister. Before God, everyone is equal. And I thought of our churches – how so often people have a favourite pew or seat. Somewhere they have sat all their lives and no one and nothing can persuade them to move from it. How we choose to sit next to friends and usually as far back as possible. (Penny wondered how it would go down if we asked everyone to fill up the church from the front, leaving no gaps.) How so many churches form cliques and special interest groups that don't allow others in or do so very reluctantly. This is not what Jesus came for! Jesus did not come to start a member's only club. He did not give his followers a theory or a written manifesto, he shared a meal with them, where he modelled a life of service by washing their feet. He came not to be a king, but to suffer and die in humiliation on the cross. One of the prayers I read in preparation for Palm Sunday, said we can easily get people to find branches to lay down, or easily order Palm crosses, but what if Jesus actually arrived here and now, inviting us to really lay down something important to us, what would we do? Would we even give up our favourite seat in the church? Would we sit next to someone we didn't know, and really welcome them? I know

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some of us would, but maybe not everyone, and then if they do something we think inappropriate like take photos or bring a drink into the service, are they still welcome? If they were poor and unwashed, smelly, maybe a different colour to us, or not mentally very well, would we really see them as our equal? The final House Group session had the title 'What is a Christian? It talked about how we are taught to lay aside differences, for in God there is no male or female, no Jew or Greek, no slave or free person.' A Christian is one who follows the way of Jesus, who serves others, who treats all as equal in the eyes of God, who lives a life of service and humility.

Easter is about re-birth, resurrection. It is about new things. Back just a generation or two, people always got new clothes at Easter, often the only new clothes they received all year. And of course, all the secular symbolism of eggs and bunnies and spring flowers is about new birth and abundance too. Here at Christ Church, we are trying to do new things, even though there is the inevitable element of 'we haven't done it like that before' or 'that won't work' and in general humans are resistant to change, we like the comfort of the way we have always done things, especially after the two years of turbulence and uncertainty we have had with the pandemic. But what has happened to all the cries of we can't go back to normal that we heard at the beginning of the pandemic? We seem to have slipped back into the same old normality without even noticing. The world outside is a mess, there is a war, food and energy prices soaring, Covid-19 levels at the highest they have ever been, but if we are truly resurrection people we should be living out that hope. We should be getting stuck into new projects – and hopefully our trial of a drop-in café can start soon, as just one example. Mary Magdalene and the other women did not stay at home crying, even though the most important person in their world had been brutally murdered, and their world had fallen apart. They went out early to go and do their duty, so go and do the things they needed to do to serve their Lord. They were afraid, but they carried on anyway. Mary was taken by surprise, was confused and didn't understand what was going on, but she ran to tell the disciples that she had seen the Lord. We may be afraid, we may not like change, we may have all sorts of problems in our lives, but Jesus did not come to take our problems and pain away, but to comfort us in the troubles of life and walk alongside us.

The building project we are undertaking, involves doing necessary repairs and making the building more energy efficient and sustainable as part of our commitment to preserving God's creation as an Eco Church, but it is also an expression of our mission; of our hope and desire as resurrection people, to reach out to the surrounding community and not only

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meet some of their needs, but also to make opportunities for us to do what Mary did on that first Easter morning – tell people about our faith, share the Good News, make a difference in people’s lives through our actions. Let us be like Mary – let us say we have seen the Lord, let us go out and tell others and let us show by our actions that Jesus is the centre of our lives.

Hymn This Joyful Eastertide R&S 248

This joyful Eastertide
away with sin and sorrow!
My love, the Crucified
has sprung to life this morrow.

Death's flood has lost its chill,
since Jesus crossed the river;
lover of souls, from ill
my passing soul deliver.

*Had Christ, that once was slain,
ne'er burst his three-days' prison
our faith had been in vain
but now has Christ arisen,
arisen, arisen, arisen.*

*Had Christ, that once was slain,
ne'er burst his three-days' prison
our faith had been in vain
but now has Christ arisen,
arisen, arisen, arisen.*

G. R Woodward

Reception of New Members

Affirmation of Faith

As followers of Jesus Christ, living in this world, which some seek to control, but which others view with despair, we declare with joy and trust: **our world belongs to God!**

From the beginning, through all the crises of our times, until His Kingdom fully comes, God keeps covenant forever. **our world belongs to God!**

We rejoice in the goodness of God, renounce the works of darkness, and dedicate ourselves to holy living, for **our world belongs to God!**

As a people called to faithful obedience, and set free for joyful praise, we offer our lives to do God's work, for **our world belongs to God!**

Introduction and Affirmation

Promises - new members and the congregation

The Welcome

Blessing of Isha and Aarya

The Aaronic Blessing R&S 420

The Lord bless you and keep you
the Lord make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious unto you:
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace.

Hymn Now the green blade rises R&S 243

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Now the green blade rises, from the buried grain,
Wheat that in 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.

In the grave they laid Him, Love whom we had slain,
Thinking that He never would awake again,
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:
Love is come again like wheat that springs up green.

Forth He came at Easter, like the risen grain,
Jesus who for three days in the grave had lain;
Quick from the dead my risen Lord is seen:
Love is come again like wheat that springs up green.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
then your touch can call us back to life again,
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:
Love is come again like wheat that springs up green.

J. M. C. Crum

Lord's Supper

Jesus stood among the disciples after he was raised and said, 'Peace be with you'.
The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And, also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Loving God, the world you made is beautiful and full of wonder.
You made us, with all your creatures, and you love all that you have made.
You gave us the words of your prophets, the stories of your people throughout the generations,
and the gathered wisdom of many years.
You gave us Jesus, your Son, to be born and to grow up
in difficult times where there was little peace.
He embraced people with your love and told stories to change us all.
He healed those in pain and brought to life those who had lost hope.
He made friends with anyone who would listen and loved even his enemies.
For these things, he suffered. For these things, he died.
And he was raised from death and lives with you forever.
You give us your Holy Spirit, to teach and to strengthen us,
to remind us of Jesus Christ and to make us one in him.
For all these gifts we thank you, and join with all your people
on earth and in heaven, in joyful praise, saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord

God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

We remember with thanksgiving Christ's life here on earth. The lessons of forgiveness he taught us.
The peace he shared with us. The healing of troubled bodies, minds and spirits he offered us. Yet
his ways of peace were met with violence from those in power.

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We recall his suffering upon the cross for our sake, and his glorious resurrection, which promises new life for all. And so we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

And we say together the prayer our Lord taught us. **Our Father...**

Send your Holy Spirit upon this bread and wine,
and upon your people, that Christ may be with us,
and we may be ready to live for you
and do what you ask of us, today and every day to come. **Amen**

On the night when he was betrayed, Jesus took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body which is broken for you. Do this is remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Sharing of bread and wine

Prayer after communion

Gracious, God, at this table your promise of life is made tangible.
We have rested in the depth of your love;
We have tasted your nourishing, nurturing presence;
Together, at this table, you have offered us life.
Together, by your grace, we accept the life you offer.
And give you thanks. **Amen**

Intercessions

O God, with faces touched by the light of a new day,
and hearts warmed by our prayers and praises,
we come before you to pray for the needs of our world.

Into the light of Easter morning
we raise those who are struggling with illness,
with despair over their lives, or with
the breakdown of relationships.
May the light of Christ shine upon them.

Into the light of Easter morning,
we bring those places in our world
where war, violence, poverty and need
are the experiences of everyday life... especially this Easter Ukraine,
and the forgotten war zones of Palestine, Syria and Yemen
May the light of Christ shine upon their people.

Into the light of Easter morning,
we bring the headline news of this week...
we hold in our hearts the pain
of those suffering violence, bereavement or conflict.
May the light of Christ shine upon them.

And into the light of Easter morning
we bring our church, may the light of your resurrection encourage us to move forward with our
mission plans, using the gift of our building to reach out to more people and share with them, your
Good News, and setting an example to all of how to live sustainably in your amazing creation.

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And, we bring ourselves, the private struggles,
the heart's yearnings, the hidden dreams,
and the unfulfilled potential.
May the light of Christ shine upon us. Amen

Hymn Thine be the Glory R&S 247

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*

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

No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of life;
life is naught 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:

Blessing (inspired by John 20:21-22)

God believes in you. The busy world awaits your compassion. **God believes in us.**
Sometimes you will give your best yet fail. **God believes in us**
At other times you will succeed in spite of your stumbling. **God believes in us**
Go gladly, daring to succeed or fail to the glory of God, and then at the very end,
nothing shall dismay you. **God believes in us**
With Christ's own breath within us, we shall travel well.

The help of the saving Christ,
the wisdom of the Living God,
and the support of the loving Spirit,
will be with you every step of the way, now and always. **Amen**

written by Bruce Prewer

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