

Christ Church Easter Sunday 2024

Music to start – Band to play 'Led like a lamb' OR video version with lyrics here:

[https://youtu.be/0DZvps7EnEo?si=NEjaONi12DT4\\_6](https://youtu.be/0DZvps7EnEo?si=NEjaONi12DT4_6)

**Alleluia, Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!**

**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 dislocated has been set right,  
All that was oppressed has been set free.

Hold your head high, Christ has risen,  
Bringing God's healing,  
Christ has come calling us home.  
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 (MP 76)

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!

Charles Wesley

**All Age time – Mark 16:1-8** (see Children's International Bible at the end)

## Christ Church Easter Sunday 2024

This is Mark's version of the story of the first Easter morning. The women go very early to take care of Jesus' body, but it's not there. The stone had already been rolled away and a young man in a white robe was sitting there and he told the women that Jesus had risen from the dead and he wasn't there, that he was going to Galilee. The women were very afraid and ran away.

Do you think the young man an angel? (In Matthew there is a great earthquake as an 'angel' rolled away the stone and sat on it. Luke - 2 men in dazzling white clothes. John – Mary stayed behind and saw two angels).

Why do you think Mark doesn't say it is an angel? And why only 1 when 2 in the other gospels?

Sometimes people remember things differently. We have four different versions of the Easter story, written by four different people, a long time after Jesus had died, so hard to remember the details.

(Matthew – women take hold of J's feet. Mark don't see or touch Jesus. Luke - don't see or touch Jesus. The disciples don't believe the women. John – Mary Mag. told not to touch Jesus.)

In John's version (we'll hear later), Mary Magdalene is very sad. In Matthew and Mark, the one Isha just read the women are very scared. Wouldn't you be very afraid if someone you loved had died and then they disappeared and someone told you they had risen from the dead? – Very confusing Has anyone been with someone they thought was dead and it turned out they weren't? This wasn't like that – Jesus really was alive after having died.

Tell you another resurrection story – Jacobo (Claudia's nephew) and the hamster, remote control plane and he thought it would be fun to put the hamster on the plane. Which is not a good idea, and you must never do anything like that with your pets. But anyway, he put the hamster on the plane and it flew up, and of course the hamster fell off. He fell from quite a height and hit the ground and it seemed like he was dead. But J's dad gave the hamster the kiss of life (check they know what that is) and the hamster woke up and was OK! It was a true miracle! That's another way, people can sometimes come back to life – if they are given CPR because they have stopped breathing, or a defibrillator starts their heart going again.

But again – what happened to Jesus was not like that. God raised Jesus from the dead because God can do anything. And Jesus went on to meet the disciples and talk to them and eat with them, though some of them took quite a lot of convincing that it really was Jesus, especially Thomas who said he couldn't believe it until he actually touched the wounds on Jesus. Do you believe? Or are you like Thomas – still with doubts?

### Offering

It is the Lord – bringing life from death.

Bringing abundance from nothing

Bringing confidence from doubt.

It is the Lord – changing the ordinary to the extraordinary.

Changing obstacle into an opportunity.

Changing our weakness into great strength.

So we ask you, Holy One to change these gifts of money into stepping stones to your Kingdom here and now.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen

### Hymn In Christ alone Red folder 43 (MP 1072)

In Christ alone, my hope is found

He is my light, my strength, my song

This Cornerstone, this solid ground

Firm through the fiercest drought and storm

What heights of love, what depths of peace

When fears are stilled, when strivings cease

My Comforter, my All in All

Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone, who took on flesh

Fullness of God in helpless babe

This gift of love and righteousness

Scorned by the ones He came to save

'Til on that cross as Jesus died

The wrath of God was satisfied

For every sin on Him was laid

Here in the death of Christ I live, I live

## Christ Church Easter Sunday 2024

There in the ground His body lay  
Light of the world by darkness slain  
Then bursting forth in glorious Day  
Up from the grave He rose again  
And as He stands in victory  
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me  
For I am His and He is mine  
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death  
This is the power of Christ in me  
From life's first cry to final breath  
Jesus commands my destiny  
No power of hell, no scheme of man  
Can ever pluck me from His hand  
Till He returns or calls me home  
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

Stuart Townend © Thankyou Music

### Children leave for Sunday Club, to come back for Communion

#### 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 rim of this 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

**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

**Bible readings: John 20:1-18**  
**Acts 10:34-43**

Today we are given two quite different versions of the Easter morning story – in Mark, the women do not see, or speak to Jesus, they are simply told by a young man at the tomb that he has been raised and they run away and tell no one because they are so afraid. In fact, there are two endings to Mark's Gospel, but in the short version we were given today, Mark's Easter sermon goes something like this: "Christ is risen! And they said nothing to anybody because they were afraid." There is no encounter with the resurrected Jesus. Instead, there is a mysterious messenger who issues a promise and a command, plus an empty tomb, and a group of three women who flee in terror, too frightened to speak.

Each of the other Gospels shares at least two pieces of evidence as proof that Jesus has risen from the dead: witnesses to the empty tomb and appearances of the risen Christ to multiple followers. In Mark, nobody gets to see Jesus, or speak to him, or touch the nail holes in his hands. There is no great commission like in Matthew, no meal shared with travellers to Emmaus like in Luke, and no intimate conversation with Mary in the garden nor the sudden arrival of the risen Christ behind locked doors as in John. Apparently, Mark's good news requires no resurrection proofs based on encounters between Jesus and his disciples. Instead, there is a promise: "He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you."

Will the disciples trust that promise? Will we?

Although Jesus predicted that he would be raised after being crucified, the concept is so incredible that nobody among his closest circle is able to fathom it. On this early morning the disciples are nowhere to be found. For their part, the women are expecting to care for a decomposing body with spices. Instead, they see a messenger dressed in white, "sitting on the right side"- language that echoes the position of honour at God's right hand. The Greek word used to express their "alarmed" reaction also carries the sense of being overwhelmed by surprise or perplexity. Nothing they see makes any sense. The idea that a person would rise from the dead is just as overwhelming and unbelievable as is the concept of a Messiah who gets crucified. Even though Jesus himself raised Lazarus. It is no wonder that "terror and amazement had seized them, and ... they were afraid".

One of Mark's unique claims is that Jesus is absent. Not only is the tomb empty, but Jesus is not there, and nobody sees him. The characters in Mark's Gospel experience the risen Christ just as we do – not physically present, but not dead. The other Gospels offer concrete assurances that Jesus is present with his followers after his death. But in Mark there is no Holy Spirit to comfort them, no fellow traveller to explain everything as on the road to Emmaus, not even the promise "I am with you always" as in Matthew's gospel. In Mark, the resurrected Jesus is not described as being "with you"; instead he is "going ahead of you." If that is true, then death is stripped of its power. There is nothing Jesus' followers will endure, no place they can go, that Jesus isn't already there.

At the beginning of his ministry in Mark, when Jesus calls his disciples, he invites them to "follow me,". From the beginning, the proper place for a disciple of Jesus is behind him, recalling that Jesus is ahead of them, even when they are unable to see him. In Mark, Jesus' ministry begins with a promise - "The kingdom of God is at hand" and ends with "There you will see him". The place the disciples will see Jesus is in the fulfilment of his promises, and in the paradox and mysteries of his ministry in Galilee, where we also find

Jesus. The way of Jesus, according to Mark, is a way of mystery and paradox. God's Messiah is crucified and yet he lives. Terror and amazement silence the women and yet somehow the good news is proclaimed. The disciples are nowhere to be found and yet we know they carry the ministry of Jesus to Galilee and beyond.

The Gospel of John is full of contrasts. The Jesus we are presented with in this gospel is often mysterious. This resurrection account is curious because the main characters seem bewildered about what is happening. The other Gospels are more straightforward in their telling of this story. Unlike the other accounts of the resurrection, we are told here that only one woman, Mary Magdalene, went to the tomb early that Sunday morning. Mary arrives at the tomb during that period of transition from darkness to light, "early in the morning ... while it was still dark." Since she is not carrying spices to anoint the body, we can assume that this narrative, like many in John, is about something else. It is about enlightenment – opening our eyes to a mystery about who Jesus is.

We are told that the two disciples "didn't yet understand the scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead". Although we are told that the other disciple (not Simon Peter) believed, this statement is immediately followed by "They didn't yet understand." Understanding and belief are contrasted several times in John's Gospel. They coexist in the life of the believer. In this case belief precedes understanding. As it does perhaps for us – the resurrection is a leap of faith – we were not there, we did not see Jesus, or speak to him. All we have is four quite different gospel accounts of what happened and our belief. It is beyond human understanding.

In John's version, Mary Magdalene who goes alone to the garden. When she saw the stone had been moved from the tomb entrance she ran and told the disciples Simon Peter and John. They went running to the tomb and on seeing the linen wrappings lying there, we are told that John, though he is not named, only described as the one whom Jesus loved, "believed" though they did not yet understand what that meant, and we are not told exactly *what* he believed. Then the two men returned to their homes, presumably without telling anyone about what they had seen. The story returns to Mary who has stayed outside the tomb crying. It is only then that she looks into the tomb and sees two angels. She turns around and sees Jesus standing there, but she does not recognise him. It is only when Jesus says her name, that she knows who he is. Mary, unlike the women in Mark's version, is not afraid. She goes straight to the disciples and announces that she has seen the Lord and tells them what he had said to her.

Although it seems obvious to us now, neither of these gospel accounts of the three women in Mark, or Mary with the two disciples in John, actually proclaim the risen Christ, though

Mary does go and tell the others. Things were still very tentative and unsure. Most of the disciples are in hiding in Jerusalem, because they are understandably afraid that if they are associated with the criminal Jesus who has been put to death, they are at risk of imprisonment and death. They have consorted with a known criminal – best to lie low and keep quiet. They still know nothing of what has been going on at the tomb. They are still sad and grieving. We proclaim Christ risen from the first rays of the rising sun on Easter morning – that is not the way it was that first Easter day.

It is a wonder we are not more tentative and unsure. Because we traditionally don't have any services on Saturday, we jump straight from the cross to the empty tomb. From the seriousness of Good Friday 'at the foot of the cross' reflections ending in silence and darkness, to shouts of hallelujah he is risen and joyful hymns. It's a big leap. Perhaps a confusing one. Easter Saturday is generally a day just like any other. You might eat some hot cross buns, but then you can eat them most of the year now anyway! Some people might start on the chocolate eggs, not bothering to wait for Sunday. Easter Saturday is a bit of a 'nothing' day – in limbo day between the Friday Bank Holiday and the Easter Sunday roast. Like the women on that first Easter morning, we have had to observe a sabbath rest with nothing going on. We've had to wait not able to do anything before we can creep to the tomb with spices to anoint the body.

In Mark's gospel a young man, or is it perhaps an angel, tells the women that Jesus of Nazareth "has been raised", but they still run away "for terror had seized them". The resurrection is merely alluded to by the absence of a body. If this were a murder mystery, would the absence of a body be enough to prove anything?! As a fan of crime dramas, I know that it is nearly always evidence from the body that leads to the identity of the murderer. If there is no body, we can only say, 'missing, presumed dead'? Simon Peter and the other disciple see the linen wrappings and 'believe' but believe what? Straight away we are told they do not understand, and they returned to their homes without telling anyone. And indeed, if today they had told anyone, it probably would be considered 'fake news' or gossipy speculation – would anyone believe them? Only Mary stays and speaks with Jesus, mistaking him for the gardener and eventually recognising him when he says her name. It is Mary who went and "announced" to the disciples that she had seen the Lord and spoken with him. The disciples went home dejected; the empty tomb not being enough for them to announce the resurrection. Mary went straight away and "announced" to the disciples that she had "seen the Lord." Mary Magdalene, that often-despised woman, is the first to proclaim that Jesus is risen.

I read a devotion earlier this week, based on verses from chapter 12 of John's Gospel, just before the procession into Jerusalem when the chief priests are planning to put Lazareth to death as well as Jesus, because many people are starting to follow Jesus because he raised Lazarus. The writer said, it's easy to vilify the chief priests but we and our churches have also been guilty of burying the evidence of the resurrecting God still at work in the world. We have worried over budgets and spreadsheets and building repairs, stayed in leadership positions long past our effectiveness because we don't have confidence in new people, trusted only what our eyes and ears can tell us, and secretly believed that God is dead, and the age of miracles has passed. We are far too intellectual and lucid to fall for an actual resurrection, and increasingly our churches are emptying and dying. Would we know a miracle if it hit us in the face? Or would we say, it'll never work, that's not how we do things, it's never been done that way before! The chief priests are an aspect of ourselves, scared to turn over power to others, reluctant to be taken in by the unexpected, the seemingly impossible, the miracles. Yet every day God is resurrecting us: sending us people, ideas, attitudes, possibilities that can change everything.

This Easter, let us embrace those possibilities and new ideas. Let us take the leap of faith, even if we don't understand everything. Let us be like Mary Magdalene announcing the resurrection to the disciples, not like the woman of Mark's gospel who ran away in fear. From John's gospel we have belief and proclamation. From Mark's gospel we have a promise and a command – go to Galilee, Jesus is going ahead of us. Jesus is already there waiting. Do we trust the promise? Let us be true disciples and follow where he goes. Amen

**Hymn** See, what a morning Red folder 83 (MP 1105)

See, what a mornin', gloriously bright  
With the dawnin' of hope in Jerusalem  
Folded the grave clothes, 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!

See Mary weepin', "Where is He laid?"  
As in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb  
Hears a voice speakin', callin' her name  
"It's the Master, the Lord, raised to life again"  
The voice that spans the years  
Speakin' life, stirrin' hope, bringin' peace to us  
Will sound 'til He appears  
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead!

One with the Father, Ancient of Days  
Through the Spirit who clothes faith with  
certainty  
Honor 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!

J Stuart Townend © Thankyou Music

### **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!**

### **Lord's Supper**

#### **Prayer of Confession**

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
for the times when we have failed to live as Easter people, in your mercy, **Lord, forgive us.**  
For the times when we have doubted the good news, in your mercy, **Lord, forgive us.**  
For the times when we have acted as though there was no good news, in your mercy,  
**Lord, forgive us.**

For this morning, above all mornings, we claim for ourselves Jesus' promise,  
that in him our sins are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen

#### **The Lord's Prayer**

Jesus stood among them 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.**

Resurrecting God, it is here at this table That we are fed by your love.  
As you pour out your Spirit upon the bread and cup, fill us with the spirit of Jesus,  
so we may go forth to be your people. Feed us with the Bread of Heaven, so we can fill the  
hunger of the world. Touch our lips with salvation's cup, so we can proclaim the good news  
of this day to everyone we meet.

May these gifts of bread and wine be to us the body and blood of Jesus Christ,  
who on the night of his arrest, betrayal and torture took bread blessed it, broke it  
and gave it to his disciples saying: "Take, eat, this is my body,  
which is given for you do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying:  
"This is my blood of the new covenant poured out for many, for the forgiveness of sins.

As often as you drink it, do it remembrance of me."

As often as you drink this bread and drink the cup,  
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

#### **Sharing of bread and wine...**

Our hearts burn within us as we recognize you here, in the breaking of bread.  
Just as the women recognized you in the garden on that first Easter morning  
Now we see the meaning of your death We look forward to your final glory  
and we pray for your kingdom to come.

We pray for the people of God - may the resurrection direct our lives,  
forever praising you from who all good things come  
and in whom we entrust our hope and invest our dreams

This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our risen Lord. **Amen**



**The body of Christ broken for you**

This is the truth we hold, the source of the joy we share,  
that 'Christ has died' and Christ is risen, In Christ shall all be made alive  
Christ is the living bread,  
Christ is the word to speak,  
Christ is the way to tread,  
Christ is the goal to seek.

**The blood of Christ shed for you**

For 'Christ has died' and Christ is risen, In Christ shall all be made alive  
One in the faith we share, out in his name we go;  
Jesus awaits us there, Longing that all should know  
That 'Christ has died' and Christ is risen, In Christ shall all be made alive. **Amen**

**Intercessions**

We remember that Jesus and his followers were Jews; that he was killed during the Jewish festival of the Passover. And we remember that through the centuries, our reading and retelling of the Passion of Christ has sometimes led to anti-Semitism, by which we are saddened, and so we open our prayers of intercession with words in Hebrew:

Adon ha-shalom, barkheinu va shalom – source of peace, bless us with peace.

We pray for peace in the Middle East, for Jews, Muslims and Christians who are all celebrating religious festivals.

Moses said shalom aleichem in Hebrew,  
Muhammed said salam alaykum in Arabic,  
Jesus said shlama ahlayku in Aramaic.

Peace be with you is the greeting of the prophets; may we strive to be peacemakers and not merely peacekeepers.

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 your 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 the world  
where war, violence, poverty and need  
are the experiences of everyday life... especially, Gaza and Ukraine  
May the light of Christ shine upon them.

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 ourselves, the private struggles,  
the heart's yearnings, the hidden dreams,  
the unfulfilled potential.  
May the light of Christ shine upon us.  
Source of peace, bless us with peace, Amen.

**Hymn** Thine be the Glory R&S 247 (Version I) (MP 689)

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:

Edmond Budry

**Blessing**

Jesus said: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am now sending you".  
Jesus 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**

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Mark 16:1-8 International Children's Bible

Jesus Rises from Death

**16** The day after the Sabbath day, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought some sweet-smelling spices to put on Jesus' body. <sup>2</sup>Very early on that day, the first day of the week, the women were on their way to the tomb. It was soon after sunrise. <sup>3</sup>They said to each other, "There is a large stone covering the entrance of the tomb. Who will move the stone for us?"

<sup>4</sup>Then the women looked and saw that the stone was already moved. The stone was very large, but it was moved away from the entrance. <sup>5</sup>The women entered the tomb and saw a young man wearing a white robe. He was sitting on the right side, and the women were afraid.

<sup>6</sup>But the man said, "Don't be afraid. You are looking for Jesus from Nazareth, the one who was killed on a cross. He has risen from death. He is not here. Look, here is the place they laid him. <sup>7</sup>Now go and tell his followers and Peter, 'Jesus is going into Galilee. He will be there before you. You will see him there as he told you before.'"

<sup>8</sup>The women were confused and shaking with fear. They left the tomb and ran away. They did not tell anyone about what happened, because they were afraid.