

A short act of worship for use in people's homes, provided by Mrs Rosie Greenhalgh.

In this special time between Christ's resurrection and ascension we continue to celebrate all that he has done for us at Easter.

Call to worship Lord, we come to you, filled with joy that you are risen.
We approach filled with hope, for you have conquered death.
We approach filled with wonder at the depth and breadth of your love.

We join in the traditional Easter greeting: Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Hymn StF 295 ¹ [To join in click here](#)

*Alleluia, Alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord,
Alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his name.*

1. Jesus is Lord of all the earth.
He is the King of creation. *Refrain.*

2. Spread the good news o'er all the earth.
Jesus has died and has risen. *Refrain.*

3. We have been crucified with Christ.
Now we shall live forever. *Refrain.*

4. God has proclaimed the just reward:
Life for us all, alleluia! *Refrain.*

5. Come, let us praise the living God,
Joyfully sing to our Saviour. *Refrain.*

Donald Fishel (b. 1950)

Prayer of Adoration

Living God, we come to praise you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

How all-embracing is your love, a love that overcomes, endures and redeems.

How astounding is your life, a life that sustains, heals and creates.

How awesome is your hope, a hope that promises, restores and inspires.

How absorbing is your truth, a truth that releases, changes and rebuilds.

How amazing is your joy, a joy that confirms, gladdens and satisfies.

Evil could not overpower you, the source of all goodness.

The tomb could not hold you, Jesus, living God.

You have conquered death and set your people free.

Fear could not bind you, courageous Lord. You tell your followers not to be afraid.

You have shown us that you are with us when the world is at its darkest.

You bring us light, new and shining with glory. We praise you, great Redeemer.

You are the God of earth and heaven, and all else there ever was.

We praise you for your power and your righteousness.

We praise you for love beyond our knowing.

Living God, we come to praise you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

We serve a risen Saviour yet live as if in chains.

Forgive us, Lord that we are so hesitant to live the resurrection life.

Forgive us that we fail to show through word and action, the truth that you loved us into your kingdom through the glorious mystery of the Cross.

Forgive us that there is still fear in our lives that prevents us from achieving our full potential.

Draw us close. Open our eyes to the glory of the risen Christ, our hearts to the wonder of the Cross and our hands to the service of your kingdom where you have placed us, that your name might be glorified through our lives. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

The disciples are gathered together in Jerusalem. The two people who walked with Jesus to Emmaus have come to tell their story, and in turn the disciples tell them that the Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon Peter. Our reading follows:

Read: Luke 24 vv 36-48 ² [To follow the Bible reading click here](#) *listen from 4 min 32 to 6 min 10*

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.'

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.'

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, 'This is what is written: the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.'

Prayer

Lord, as we come to meditate on your word, open our minds as you opened the minds of your followers 2000 years ago, that we may understand the Scriptures. Amen.

Reflection

Last week we heard John's account of Jesus' appearance to the disciples on the evening of the first Easter Day. Today we read Luke's version of that same event. Perhaps we should remind ourselves that Luke, himself a Gentile, was writing his account for Theophilus, who was probably a Christian Roman, 'so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught'.
Luke 1 vv 3-4

Like John, Luke is keen to stress that Jesus' resurrection body was not some ethereal apparition, but made of flesh and bones. The disciples are shown Jesus' hands and feet, encouraged to touch him, and even watch him eat. These things convince them that although the resurrected Jesus seems to appear and disappear at will, he truly is physically risen. As Jesus says to them: 'It is I myself!'

The disciples' fear is turned to joy and amazement – they can't believe what they are seeing. This is such a human reaction when something really good happens. Those who win the lottery often say something like, 'When I got the phone call, I couldn't believe it!' Luke helps us experience the rollercoaster of emotions which the disciples felt at that first appearance. He wants us to realise the certainty of the things we have been taught; the reality of the resurrection.

Jesus goes on to tell the disciples just how important his resurrection is. The whole of the Old Testament – 'the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms' – points to the coming of the Messiah, to his suffering and rising from the dead on the third day. The resurrection is God's vindication of Jesus' claim to be the Messiah. Now they – and we – know for certain that Jesus is the Messiah and that all that he taught comes from God.

And because Jesus rose, 'the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep' *1 Corinthians 15 v 20*, we know that we too shall rise. This is what robs death of its sting. Jesus taught that God is God of the living, not the dead *Matthew 22 vv 31-32* and that those who die are in Paradise today *Luke 23 v 43*.

The Church has always taught the communion of saints, what one of our hymns calls 'mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won'. Although in an earthly sense death's final defeat and the Last Judgement lie in the future, in a heavenly sense they have already happened. Another example of the 'now and not yet' of our faith, which Rachel spoke of in our Easter Day circuit service. And so we know with certainty that our loved ones who have died are with God and that in some way we have relationship with them. This is a great comfort in these days of the Covid pandemic, when so many have passed on without our being able to attend their funerals. One day we shall meet again, but even now we can feel a connection with them.

Jesus does not stop with the resurrection. He tells his disciples that the Scriptures show that repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in the Messiah's name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. Luke will go on to tell in his companion volume, The Acts of the Apostles, how Peter began to do this soon after the Holy Spirit came. You might like to read Acts 3 vv 12-19, another of the lectionary readings for today, either now or at the close of this service.

Lastly, Jesus tells his disciples that they are the witnesses of these things. They are the ones who will have to testify to the truth of the resurrection; they are the ones who will have to pass on all that Jesus said and did in his ministry; they are the ones who will have to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name. For they are to be the body of Christ, the ones who will carry on his work when his Spirit is within them. And we know that they did just that; we owe them a great debt, for without their faithfulness, we would know nothing of the Messiah who came to die for our sins and be raised from death for us. We too are witnesses of the things which have been done in the name of Jesus. We may not be witnesses of the resurrection, but we have seen how repentance and forgiveness of sins are being preached to all nations in the name of Christ. We have seen how people like John Wesley and William Wilberforce sought the abolition of slavery in the name of Christ; how Martin Luther King campaigned for black people's rights in the name of Christ; how Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu brought about bloodless revolution in South Africa in the name of Christ.

We ordinary Christians have an important part to play in helping others come to faith. We are to be the body of Christ, those who carry on his work because his Spirit is within us. Our faith shapes our views and attitudes to life, and people see that, but it is also important to tell others what we believe. Do we tell family members about our faith? Do we tell our friends what is being done today in the name of Christ? This Easter, let's resolve to let our witness shine out to all those we meet, as we proclaim: He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

Hymn StF 303 [To join in click here](#)

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| 1. I know that my Redeemer lives -
What joy the blest assurance gives!
He lives, He lives, who once was dead;
He lives, my everlasting Head! | 3. He lives, and grants me daily breath;
He lives, and I shall conquer death;
He lives, my mansion to prepare;
He lives, to lead me safely there. |
| 2. He lives to bless me with His love;
He lives to plead for me above;
He lives my hungry soul to feed;
He lives to help in time of need. | 4. He lives, all glory to his name!
He lives, my Saviour, still the same.
What joy the blest assurance gives,
I know that my Redeemer lives! |

Samuel Medley (1738-1799)

Prayer of Intercession

God of the bright and morning star, God of the rising sun of righteousness, God of darkness banished, we praise and worship you! Help us to grasp resurrection: to understand its power, to see its force at work in our world; overturning evil empires, changing the hatred within us, moving the world slowly, forcefully; bending us towards love and truth.

In the light and the glory of the resurrection we pray for our world

For areas of violence and hostility: Myanmar, Yemen, Syria, Northern Ireland...

For people suffering the ravages of the Covid pandemic with inadequate health services
and little access to vaccines...

For lands where famine is rife or where floods, hurricanes and wildfires destroy homes...

For all those who today struggle to find joy in the resurrection story...

May the light of the risen Christ shine upon them and bring them joy.

In the light and the glory of the resurrection we pray for the Church throughout the world

For places where it is thriving and growing;

For places where it is shrinking and disregarded by many

For those Christians suffering persecution for their faith in Africa and the Middle East

For our own church, its minister Peter Bennett as he prepares for his sabbatical, and its
Pastoral Development Worker Karen Frost.

May the light of the risen Christ shine upon the Church he loves and bring us faith.

In the light and the glory of the resurrection we raise before God those who are struggling with
illness, bereavement, despair about the state of their lives, or with the breakdown of
relationships. We bring before God those we know who are in special need of prayer,
remembering our Royal Family following the funeral of the Duke of Edinburgh yesterday...

May the light of the risen Christ shine upon them and bring them hope.

And in the light and the glory of the resurrection we bring ourselves, our private struggles during
lockdown; the heart's yearnings, the hidden dreams, the unfulfilled potential.

May the light of the risen Christ shine upon us and bring us new life.

In this world of broken hopes and dreams we catch sight of your kingdom come, in the person of
the risen Christ, who lives and reigns in us forever. Fill our hearts with his peace. Amen.

Hymn StF 297 ³ [To join in click here](#)

1. Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.
The cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises ring.
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.

2. Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time.

3. In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, where even hope has died.

4. Women and men, in age and youth
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth,
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

5. Christ is alive and comes to bring
good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring
with joy, with justice, love and praise.

Brian Wren (b. 1936)

Blessing

May the risen Lord be with you as you serve him in the world. May his strength sustain you; his
peace still you; and his love inspire you to live and love as he did.

And the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon us and all those we
love, now and for ever. **Amen.**

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