

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Revd Dan Haylett. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church - pray for them as they pray for you.

Opening Prayer

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

As we come to worship, may we, like the women at the empty tomb, celebrate and share the joyous news of your rising, of love, hope, forgiveness, and freedom.
Risen Christ, draw close as we worship. **Amen.**

Hymn: StF 298 Christ the Lord is risen today

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRmDIB_w5BY

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!

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!

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!

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!

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 (1707-1788)

Let us pray together

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.

Glory 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.** (MWB p.160)

Today's Epistle Reading: Romans 1:16-17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith."

Today's Gospel Reading: Luke 24:1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. ⁶Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.' ⁸Then they

remembered his words,⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles.¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Time to Reflect

“Easter was when Hope in person surprised the whole world by coming forward from the future into the present.”

N.T. Wright, ‘Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church’, (London: SPCK), 2007.

Hope in person, in Christ Jesus surprises the world even down to today. It’s at the heart of what we say in greeting each other with the traditional Easter words:

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

It’s why we sing our Easter hymns that dare to echo notes of hope and gladness, even though the hardness and desperation many of God’s people experience.

It’s why we can say and mean in the face of personal challenges, “I don’t know where I would be without faith”.

Jesus’ rising from the tomb is the underscoring of the resilience and tenacity of hope, as God’s resurrection power is unleashed into all creation. Hope continues to surprise us, even if we imagine we are well passed the stage of having the capacity for surprise any longer!

In the first accounts of Easter the surprise of what is unfolding seems to (naturally enough) dominate over the hope that is brought forward. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the other women who have journeyed to the cross with Jesus are now present and find his body gone; we read of their perplexity and terror. The apostles (only Peter is named directly) disbelieve and are left in amazement. Hope takes some getting used to; eyes that have been tear filled require time to adjust to the light of a new day and new reality.

Today as we celebrate our Easter hope, we are shown three things God is doing in the lives of those who are called to witness to the power of the resurrection:

Remember. The women, confronted by strangers at the tomb are invited to remember Jesus' words and it is this memory which stirs them to action.

In the context, remembering isn't a nostalgic harking back, or a mere recollection of words and experiences shared with Jesus. It's a true re-membering: being put back together as the first witnesses to Christ's resurrection brought to mind the faithfulness and love they had previously seen and found in Jesus. The hope that they were recalling from his words became a spur, compelling them to act, to tell, to share in God's mission. Remembering our ground for hope, as we – and all creation – are held in God's covenantal love, can do the same for us.

Returning. Once the women remember what they had known to be true, they find the courage and the impetus to return to the others.

There has been lots of talk this year about "recovery" from the pandemic, and a "return" to normal. There's something comforting about returning to practices that we have found

helpful, reviving a sense of that which holds us and helps us to thrive. At the same time, we've grown in awareness too that what was previously done and accepted in all walks of life may not be the best for now, for everyone.

When those at the tomb first return, they are travelling as people who are already being transformed. Moved from the inertia of their grief, in simply putting one foot in front of the other they find they are leaving the tomb behind. Their words are already forming as they prepare to tell others, not necessarily to explain what they have found but to share their new found wonderment and hope. The return to the apostles shows us what happens when we are prepared to be moved in resurrection power.

Reformed. The remembering and returning leads to a reformation of the first believers. They are reformed into a community of faith born out of the reality of resurrection hope breaking upon them. This is what Jesus' resurrection appearances seal within the new "church": amazement and wonder begin to subside as forgiveness and empowerment to service as mission takes root. The future hope of all being made well was being dragged into the here and now.

For us as we reflect on the majesty of this Easter mystery, we do so knowing that so many need a new perspective of hope.

We ourselves have felt deprived of hope as we've considered the violent reality of Ukraine, and other places of conflict. We've been remembering two years of pandemic and the real costs that have been felt.

Yet all the while, we have done this as Easter people. Hope is with us in Christ Jesus, risen from the dead. We are invited today to remember to hope, to allow that hope to return us to God's mission and to allow ourselves, our Church, and our world to be reformed in the image of Christ.

May hope be real within you today.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

A time of prayer

In our time of prayer there is an opportunity to bring before God the things on our hearts and minds using the following themes:

Holy God,
we come to you today with our prayers:
We pray for our world...
We pray for the Church...
We pray for all those striving for justice...
We pray for those who are unwell...

We pray for those grieving the loss of loved ones... (Time of silence)

We offer all our prayers in and through the name of the risen Christ, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Hymn: Singing the Faith 313 Thine be the glory

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tjz4yXUJrgU>

*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 (1854-1932)
translated by Richard Birch Hoyle (1875-1939)*

A prayer of blessing

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, strengthen us to walk with him in his risen life; and may almighty God bless us, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen. (MWB, p.173)

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