



Because Christ Lives, I Can Face Tomorrow

We Gather

Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle. Start by lighting the candle. The candle helps to centre us. Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.

It is hard not being together on this most special morning. At other times we would have gathered to watch the sun rise and to greet the risen Christ with the morning sun. We would have enjoyed some hot coffee and hot cross buns as we affirmed our shared faith in the risen Christ amongst all his followers in our community. We might even have snuck in some chocolate Easter eggs before Church!

Still, we gather today, knowing that in homes across the world, Jesus' followers are doing what we are doing - they too are gathering in their households, small though they may be right now, and affirming together the deepest truth of Christian faith:
Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed!

And maybe at another time today or later in the week, we will gather by phone or across the internet to affirm together:

Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed!

Acknowledgement of Country

The Ancient of Days, [God the Creator], breathed life into this Land and her Peoples. From time beyond our reckoning the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation have blessed this place through their care and concern.

We pay our respects to their Elders and Leaders, past and present, and we pray for the future of their communities.

May we walk gently and respectfully on this Land.

(c) 2017, A.Koh-Butler, This land is God's land and God's Spirit dwells here.

Call to Worship

Psalm 118 says this:

²² The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.

²³ This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvellous in our eyes.

²⁴ This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Prayer

Jesus Christ, we greet you!
Your hands still have holes in them,
your feet are wet from the dew;
and with the memory of our names
undimmed by three days of death
you meet us,
risen from the grave.

We fail to understand how;
we puzzle at the reason why.

But you have come:
not to answer our questions,
but to show us your face.

Adapted from "Stages On The Way", Wild Goose Worship Group, 1998

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed!

Sing - *what is your favourite Easter hymn or song?*
Sing it now - or listen to a recording if you have one

Prayer

What are you thankful for?

Risen Christ we praise you!
Through our struggle and discomfort and dis-ease, we praise you.
We praise you that even when the world seems dark, when the way ahead seems unclear,
when we are simply not sure of what might happen next, you break into our world
breathing life in all its fullness.
Speak our names, today, meet us as you met your disciples.
Open our eyes to see, our minds to understand, our hearts to share.

The light is breaking; the stone is rolled away!
We are called to bear witness, in the clear light of a new day, to the triumph of love over
hatred, the power of vulnerability over fear.
Yet we are fearful.

The cross still feels like the end,
the finality of death and heaviness still cling to our souls.
We believe more firmly in the human power of death than in the power of Creation, of life
despite its abundance around us.

Forgive us, risen Christ.

Forgive us for fleeing the light, for hiding our light.

Forgive us for the hesitant alleluias,
the sense that there must be a catch,
the unwillingness to believe wholeheartedly in the power of love.

Forgive us our silence in the face of miracles.

Forgive us when we turn away from your presence.

Risen Christ, roll away the stones that entomb our hearts.
Shine your resurrection light into the shadows of our beings.
Drive out from our minds all that keeps us from the abundant life you offer.
Holy One, open us to the power of love. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Fear cannot drive God out.

Anger and hatred cannot separate us from the love that is willing to pour itself out for our sake. Weeping may last for the night, but joy comes in the morning.

Christ is risen.

Love stands triumphant.

Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Amen.

Seasons of The Spirit

We Listen for God's Voice

Reading: John 20:1-18

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. ²So 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.' ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' ¹⁶Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." ' ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Reflection

God of grace, open our eyes to see you.

Open our hearts to let what we see in you change our lives. Amen.

Easter is a special time of the year. Still in what some would describe as a post-Christian country, it affords a 4-day holiday with Good Friday and Easter Sunday still held with some sacredness, even if it is for the abundance of hot cross buns and chocolate Easter eggs. For Christians, it is the central story of our faith - the resurrection of Christ is the moment, the event that embodies God's story of abundant grace and everlasting life. This moment is the key to who God is, who we are and who we are called to be.

This risen Christ points to the truth that God's love has defeated all the powers of the world, even death itself. All the powers of the world do not have the final word, God does.

As with all celebrations, religious or otherwise, when they are tied to a date or particular time of the year, the celebrations wait for no-one. And sometimes the celebrations almost jar against the reality we are experiencing - it is hard to celebrate resurrection when we are still mourning the death of someone close to us. That was me at this time last year. My Mum had just passed away after a long battle and I was exhausted.

This year, Easter comes surrounded by the threat of illness and restrictions on our movement. We are unable to greet our friends with a handshake or embrace. Many of us have not seen family members in a while now and we are all unsure as to when we might see them again.

And yet...

And yet...

Mary encounters an empty tomb.

Mary comes to the tomb early to finish the work of preparing the body, a task left incomplete as darkness fell and the Passover began a few days before. But as she approaches, she sees the stone rolled away.

She runs to tell the others, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' (v.2) And she returns with Peter and another disciple, who run to the tomb to confirm that it is indeed empty - they see no body, no one else, just folded grave cloths. They believe that Jesus has been raised from the dead but they are yet to understand (v.9). And then they return home (v.10).

Mary, however, remains at the tomb, weeping.

'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him,' she says to the two messengers she sees sitting inside the tomb (v.13).

And then the gardener speaks to her, and again this time she wonders whether he is responsible for moving the body, 'Sir,' she says, 'if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' (v.15)

The gardener speaks one word, her name, "Mary".

In that moment, Mary knows who she is speaking with.

Out of the depth of her grief, she knows it is Jesus.

I like to think that she is able to hold that moment, to treasure it, to celebrate it.

But the story moves on quickly as Jesus tells her not to cling to him but to return to the other disciples and tell them what she has seen.

Whether we are ready or not,
whether the world is ready or not,
God breaks in.

God breaks through.

God has already shown us that love is stronger than all the world can muster.

So whether you are enjoying being tied down a little more than we are used to, or struggling with not being able to be with the people we love most;

whether you are continuing to work in a role that is needed to keep us all safe, whether you are working from home and juggling family life in a confined space; whether you are hunkered down at home or not sure what next week will bring, perhaps we can each spend some time that John's telling of the events seem not to afford - time to savour, to sit with the news that Jesus Christ is risen, to consider deeply what it means for us to embrace a life that believes that love has conquered all the world can throw at us.

During this time of enforced isolation, may we be beacons of love and hope in our communities. And may we take the time to ponder deeply how when life re-emerges, how different it might be.

We Respond

Prayer for Others

Spend some time thinking about the people around you: who have you noticed this week, who is struggling, who has been a friend for you?

- *family*
- *friends*
- *neighbours*
- *people who are ill or struggling or lonely*
- *is there anyone you could make a point of contacting this week - pray for them*

Give thanks for health workers, researchers, government officials - working to provide care, healing and organisation. Pray for them - for strength and compassion.

Give thanks for the many essential workers who work to keep our society functioning - teachers, child care workers, grocery workers, truck drivers, garbage collectors, postmen and women. Pray for them - for persistence and courage.

Pray for people who have lost their work - business owners, employees, casual workers, the self-employed.

Pray for our leaders - for wisdom and courage.

Pray for people in other parts of the world where medical facilities are less able to provide care to people who are ill.

Pray for the church - that we will learn to be the church even when we are unable to gather. May we be light and life in our communities.

As we settle into a new way of being, pray for patience and a deep sense of peace. God of Life - speak to us in new ways, nudge us into new ways of being. Without our regular groups and routines, help us to use our time wisely. May we take time, to listen to you more deeply.

We have seen our God! By God's grace and in God's own holy love, we turn our hearts to the divine that surrounds and upholds us.

Yet we are called, not merely to see our God, but to help make our God visible in this

world: to do the work of love put into action in service to the Body of Christ.

And so, we pray for all for whom crucifixion still seems a clearer reality than resurrection; for those who are hungry, or unsure when and where their family's next meal will be,

help us to be your light, O Christ.

For those who are ill or in pain; those who are swamped in medical bills; those who struggle still to receive adequate care,

help us to be your light, O Christ.

For those who are living with mental illness, who suffer all the more from stigma and shame and social exclusion,

help us to be your light, O Christ.

For those who work long hard days for inadequate wages, and for those who will not give up a bit of comfort so that all might have justice,

help us to be your light, O Christ.

For those who are living in places of violence and fear, where families have been torn apart, and trauma is a way of life,

help us to be your light, O Christ.

Help us to learn that even in the midst of despair, there may be love; even in the midst of fear, there may be comfort; even on Good Friday, there is the seed of Easter. May we nurture God's light and God's love into this world that is in desperate need of healing. May we be the active promise of new life in this community, and the blessing of God's love and grace to all who are in need. May we receive the Good News: Christ is Risen! Love has conquered death! and return to the work of discipleship with joyous hearts and praising hands. In the name of the risen Christ we pray:

Alleluia! Amen.

Holy Communion

For those gathering online, we will share in Holy Communion together.

If you are not able to participate, and you would like to share in Holy Communion sometime soon, please be in touch with Kath or one of the Elders and we will try to make that happen.

Offering

In responding to what we have read and how we have heard God speak to us, we commit ourselves to breathing life in the world around us.

If you make a regular financial contribution to the Kiama-Jamberoo Congregation, consider putting that amount aside now and keeping it safe.

We pray...

Holy One, giver of life and conqueror of death, we recommit ourselves to you this day.

We have witnessed your resurrection.

We have been given new life.

We dedicate ourselves to living as a people of peace; as a people of hope; as a people of your holy and grace-filled love.

May all that we do reflect the love that you have poured out upon us: may we love all of your Creation as you have loved us, with generosity, abundance, and mercy. Alleluia!

Amen.

Seasons of The Spirit

Notices

Keep an eye on the website, facebook page and the e-news for updates.

If you hear of or notice anyone needing a bit of extra support, please let Kath, Janice, or one of the Elders or Pastoral Partners know.

We Go

Sending and Blessing

Go now, aware of the presence of new life continually around you.

Go now, living in the promises of the God who will not abandon us, but whose love endures forever.

Go now, proclaiming the Good news:

We have seen our God!

Christ is Risen!

Christ is Risen indeed!

Worship Resources taken from:

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