



Seeking: Who Are You Looking For?

Gathering

Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.

*This week, it would be appropriate to find a **white** cloth or scarf to signify that this is a special time of celebration. Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

Christ is risen

Christ is risen indeed!



Gathering

What a day! What a morning!

All the opposites are happening:

from shadow to light, from death to life,

from sadness to joy, from graveyard to garden,

from being lost to being found again, from hatred to love,

from night to morning, from silence to alleluias.

Everything has turned around and today

may we celebrate and let go a little,

breathe in new life, enjoy the light,

share the good news and worship the risen Lord. Alleluia!

Spill The Beans, Issue 46, Resources for Easter, 9 April 23, p.84

Light Candle

This morning we light a new candle.

In Jesus' resurrection, life is renewed.

And so once more, we are drawn to its flame.

We look to Jesus, the light of the world, a light that shines even in the darkest of times offering hope and healing.

Christ is risen

Christ is risen indeed!

Acknowledgement of Country

The Ancient of Days, 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.

From river to ocean, from campfire to hearth

may the First Nations who have cared for this land be blessed.

From breath to song,

from step to dance

may those who follow your Songlines guide us on the journey to living honourably in this place.

From greeting to Amen,
from silence to chorus

may our worship join with the voices of the First Nations of this Land.

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

Call to Worship

What are you looking for?

The light before dawn.

What are you looking for?

A reason to hope.

What are you looking for?

Joy after grief.

What are you looking for?

A place to belong.

What are you looking for?

We are looking for the Messiah.

Good news! Come in. Love is alive!

Surely God is in this place.

Prayer

Rabbouni, Teacher,

We have spent the past six weeks asking questions.

We have turned over every rock.

We have shone a light in every dusty corner.

We have opened the blinds.

We have wrestled with truth.

We have sought after you.

So on this Easter morning,

bring wisdom to our seeking.

Move through this place until the walls echo with the sound of alleluias.

Roll back the stones that might prevent us from drawing closer to you.

Calm our hearts. Say our names.

Awaken us to your presence in our midst.

We are here. We are listening.

We are seeking after you.

Alleluia. Amen.

Sing - Yours Be The Glory (TIS 380)

So we sing a hymn that offers praise to God in the wonder of the risen Christ.

Yours/Thine - whatever is closest to your heart!

Yours be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory over death you've won;

angels in bright raiment rolled the stone
away,
kept the folded grave-clothes, where your
body lay.

*Yours be the glory,
risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory
over death you've won.*

See, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;
lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and
gloom;

let the church with gladness hymn of
triumph sing,
for the Lord is living, death has lost its
sting.

*Yours be the glory,
risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory
over death you've won.*

No more we doubt you, glorious Prince of life;
life is naught without you: aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors through your deathless love;

bring us safe through Jordan to your home above.
*Yours be the glory,
risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory
over death you've won.*

Words: Edmond Louis Budry

Prayer

O God, we come as Easter people
to open our eyes to new sights and sounds.

We come to find resurrection even when Good Friday hangs so heavily in our world.

We come to be changed by songs of birds and angels and find new signs of life all around us.

We come to find that we can be different when we open our eyes and ears to joy.

We come to touch and smell the good news and find that you, O God, make all things new again.

We come to praise you with all of our whole bodies.

Alleluia!

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed!

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Easter, 9 April 2023, p.103

Prayer of Confession - intro

How often does this happen in your household...

"Mom! I can't find my tennis shoes!"

or "Honey, I can't find my keys!"

And someone lovingly shouts back, "Have you checked in your wardrobe?"

"Did you check the kitchen bench?"

Of course, the reassurance is given, "Of course I checked there and they aren't there!"

Eventually someone (I won't stereotype, who - but you all know!) walks up to the bedroom or the laundry or the kitchen bench and picks up said lost item.

Of course it was there all along.

Friends, sometimes our relationship with God can feel a little bit like that.

We seek after God.

We swear that we're looking,

and yet so often we miss when the Divine is right under our noses.

So let us pray together, knowing that our seeking has its limits, but God's love does not.

Let us pray:

Prayer

God of resurrection,

We confess, that so often we run aimlessly.

We chase our tails, looking for things that provide answers to the suffering of the world,
looking for comfort to our longest nights,
looking for simple answers to deeply complex problems.

You meet us in the darkness before dawn,
but we mistake you for the gardener.

Forgive us for seeking after worldly things, stuff that simply doesn't matter to you.

Forgive us when we seek but can't see beyond our noses.
Forgive us when we seek but only want to see what suits us, what fits our expectations and sensibilities.
Forgive us for forgetting to seek you.
Speak to us.
Call us by name, that we might recognise you in our midst.
With hope and gratitude we pray, amen.

Words of Assurance

Family of faith,
No matter how many times we lose sight of God, God never loses sight of us.
We might spend our whole days seeking, but we are always found.
So hear and believe the good news of the gospel, the good news proclaimed in resurrection:

What once was lost is found.

We are held in God's loving embrace: forgiven, claimed, and sent to serve.
Alleluia! Amen.

Listening for God's Voice

Reading: Matthew 28:1-20 [and/or you might like to read John 20:1-18]

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him." This is my message for you.' ⁸So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'

¹¹ While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹²After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, ¹³telling them, 'You must say, "His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep." ¹⁴If this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.' ¹⁵So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day.

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

For the Word of God in Scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us,
Thanks be to God!

Reflection

God of grace, open our eyes to see you.

Open our hearts to let your vision change our lives. Amen.

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Easter, 9 April 2023, p.100

Who are you looking for?

In John's account of the resurrection, this is the question the gardener (Jesus) asks Mary as she stands weeping outside the tomb (John 20:15).

Perhaps today, the question we are more likely to ask is "*what* are you looking for"?

When we think about how we build our lives or seek purpose in our living, when we make choices about our career and family, we are often looking for *something*.

And I want to suggest, that it is in those moments, those moments of searching and wondering why we can't find what we are looking for, that the real question is the one Jesus asks Mary, not *what*, but *who* are you looking for?

I often wonder about those women approaching the tomb early in the morning, before it was light.

Were they chatting together as women often do,

or were they silently carrying their grief as women often do,

or were they crying openly as women sometimes do?

And just how terrifying it must have been, in the half-light of the early morning, to see the tomb stone not where they had left it.

Matthew's account of that first Easter morning includes another earthquake (like the one when Jesus died (27:51) and a scary looking angel (28:2) - scary enough to stun the guards into a stupor. This angel tells the women not to be afraid because Jesus is not here, but has been raised as he had said (28:6).

In Matthew's account, the women enter the tomb (they don't do that in John's account), and then go to tell the disciples. But on their way, Jesus meets them and they fall at his feet in worship (28:9), and he tells them to go and tell the others to meet him in Galilee (28:10).

I have already said a couple of times over these past weeks, we need to remember that the gospel writers are not all that concerned with the what or the how of the events they are describing. Different details are included in each of the gospel accounts - and we can see that the details they each include develop over time as their reason for telling the story changes.

In Mark's gospel, the women leave the empty tomb and say "nothing to anyone" (Mark 16:8).

By the time Matthew gets to writing his account, remember he is writing in particular to a Jewish audience so he includes the part where the religious leaders come up with a story to counter the news of the risen Christ (Matthew 28:11-15).

And by the time John's gospel is being penned, there are several more stories included of those who encountered Jesus after his resurrection.

So while we could spend time debating what the resurrection of Jesus looked like, that is not the concern of the gospel writers. Their concern is to help us figure out the why and what it means for us.

Matthew's gospel ends with the disciples in Galilee being sent into the world, reminded that Jesus is with them always (28:16-20) but not before Matthew notes that not all of them were convinced, "they doubted" (28:17).

So if you are yet to be convinced, you are in good company and as we have been considering over the past 7 weeks or so, your questions, your searching, your seeking is very much a part of our growing as followers of Christ.

And I hope, that as we ask the question today, "Who are you looking for?", you will find your answer in Jesus. That's not to say you will find one clear image of who this Jesus is - his life is as multi-faceted and complex as any life is. But as we have explored particularly over the last 3 days, one thing we can be sure about is that Jesus is the embodiment of God's love.

And in his resurrected life, we see Love.

This is love.

This is God's love for the cosmos.

This is God's resounding yes to the world of God's creating.

This is love

every time a seed lies dormant under the winter soil and sprouts into new life in the spring

every time a baby is born

every time light dances in someone's eyes or a smile flashes across a face

every time a seed is burst open by a bush fire

every time a drink or a meal is offered

every time a hand is offered in support or aid

every time green buds emerge from the black and grey ash or the sodden, flooded earth

every time directions are given to a lost tourist

every time a card or letter is written

every time a friendly face appears at a hospital bed

every time hope emerges from what seemed lost

every time justice is spoken and enacted

every time peace reigns

every time a light is shone into darkness

every time a song is sung in protest

Jesus, standing in the garden, outside the tomb, meeting his disciples in Galilee, sending them, sending us, into the world - is God's yes to life, to our lives and to the life of the world.

Who are you looking for?

My hope and my prayer is that you will look for Jesus.

And what I know is, when you do, you will find him.

And in him, you will find the life and love you so long for.

Let us pray,

Lord Jesus Christ,

here are your disciples -

your wounded hands and feet in the world today are ours.

At times we have been frightened,

kept our distance,

worried about our safety or reputations.

But you came close to us,

unlocking our potential and setting us free.

At times we have been full of doubt,

when creeds conflict and certainty evades us.

But you came close, allowed us to speak our minds,

accepted us and set us free.

At times we have been confused,
feeling far from you with questions that don't have answers.
So you come close, whispering our names
and sending us into the world to share our encounter with you.
Through our fear,
through our doubt,
through our confusion,
may we continue to do your work in the world,
as we take many different paths,
yet united in your love and life. Amen.

Adapted from Wild Goose Resources, Stages On The Way, p.198

Responding

Sing - Praise The God Who Changes Places (TIS 178)

We sing another song of praise - to the God who comes amongst us offering hope and freedom.

Praise the God who changes places,
leaves the lofty seat,
welcomes us with warm embraces,
stoops to wash our feet.

Friends be strong!

Hold your heads high!

Freedom is our song! Alleluia!

Praise the Breath of Love, whose freedom
spreads our waking wings,
lifting every blight and burden
till the spirit sings:

Friends be strong!

Hold your heads high!

Freedom is our song! Alleluia!

Praise the rabbi, speaking, doing
all that God intends,
dying, rising, faith renewing,
calling us his friends.

Friends be strong!

Hold your heads high!

Freedom is our song! Alleluia!

Praise, until we join the singing
far beyond our sight,
with the Ending-and-Beginning,
dancing in the light.

Friends be strong!

Hold your heads high!

Freedom is our song! Alleluia!

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Words: Brian Arthur Wren

Prayer for Others

Jesus is risen,
he is not here.

The world is once more celebrating and alleluia's fill the air.

Death is defeated, love has won.

We are so grateful for all that Jesus has done for us

and we are humbled by the unconditional love you have revealed for us through him.

Almost 2000 years later

we are still just learning

what it means to be your beloved children.

We are still discovering more and more about the depth of your love

and your desire to walk with us day by day.

We are thankful for all the women and men

who faced their fears and unbelief

and bravely shared the story of resurrection.

We are thankful for all who witness to the risen Christ
then and now.
Your love is needed as much as ever today.

Help us be witnesses telling your good news
through our words and actions, in our daily living and loving service.

We remember people who live in fear today,
may they cling to the hope that love will overcome.
We remember people who live in places of violence, conflict and war,
send your peacemakers into those places that all may know your peace.
We hold each one who faces physical, emotional or spiritual pain or abuse today,
may your peace and healing surround and comfort them.
We pray for people who have yet to discover the good news of your love,
help us to draw them to you so that they may share in our joy.

We give thanks today for all who work across this holiday season offering care, hospitality
and emergency services. May they also know the joy of your love and have opportunity for
refreshment and renewal.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers. Amen.

Spill The Beans, Issue 46, Resources for Easter, 9 April 23, p.85

Holy Communion

*If you would like to share in Communion and are unable to join with us in-person, please
let Rev Kath or Rhonda Back know. We would love to bring Communion to you in your
home at a time that suits you.*

Offering

As we have received, so we consider our response...

*We make space now to think about what we have heard and seen today and consider our
response.*

*As we make our offering - we remember again that this is not just about money - either
here in the plate or through a bank transfer - this is also about how we are generous with
our time and energy and gifts; and about how we resolve to live differently because we
have encountered the living Christ.*

Jesus is not here,
he is risen.

Loving God, receive our offerings.

Use them to let the good news of resurrection spread far and wide.

Living God, receive all that we offer,
our very selves,

help us to be selfless as Jesus was, serving others in love.

Your kingdom is here and now,

help us to continue to grow and build it. Amen.

Spill The Beans, Issue 46, Resources for Easter, 9 April 23, p.87

Sending

Sing - Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ (TIS 537)

What we have celebrated here this morning is meaningless without it having changed something in us, without it having challenged us about the way we live in the world. We go singing a song of commitment and celebration.

Let us talents and tongues employ,
reaching out with a shout of joy;
bread is broken, the wine is poured,
Christ is spoken and seen and heard.

at the table he sets the tone,
teaching people to live to bless,
love in word and in deed express.
Jesus lives again...

*Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!
Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!*

Jesus calls us in, sends us out
bearing fruit in a world of doubt,
gives us love to tell, bread to share;
God-Immanuel everywhere.
Jesus lives again...

Christ is able to make us one,

© Frederick Herman Kaan

Blessing

Jesus is not here, he is risen.
He is everywhere all the time.
So let us go and share this wonderful news,
let us shout it from the rooftops,
let us sing it in the streets.
Let us be bold and brave as we go.
And may we dwell in the Creator's delight,
share in the new risen life of Jesus
and walk with the joy of the spirit
who dwells within us and around us, always. Amen.

Spill The Beans, Issue 46, Resources for Easter, 9 April 23, p.87

Liturgy adapted from material from:
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Spill The Beans, Resources for Lent-Easter 2023
A Sanctified Art: Seeking, www.sanctifiedart.org
Rev Kath Merrifield
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