



Risen!

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 or gold** cloth or scarf for this special celebration.*

Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.



Video - Welcome Home

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woK-4dK3cXE>

Gathering

Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed!

From the earliest of times, this was a greeting shared between the followers of Jesus - not just at Easter time, but all the time, as a time of identifying one another and sharing in the hope of the risen Christ.

Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed!

Light Candle

Early in the morning, while it was still dark,
the women went to the tomb
wondering if there would be anyone there to roll away the stone
to let them attend to the body of their friend.

But when they got there,
the stone had already been moved
and their friend's body was gone.

And they are told - he is risen; he is not here!

Light the candle

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed!

Acknowledgement of Country

In this place,
where the land meets the sea,
where the sea makes a noise,
since time beyond our imagination,

the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation have cared for the land and the sea and its creatures great and small.

We pay our respects to their Elders and Leaders.

And we pray for our future together -

there is work to be done to build relationships that honour and respect those for whom this land is embedded in their being.

We commit ourselves to the way of love.

Call to Worship

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

Psalm 118:24

Opening prayer

God of the empty tomb,

Holy One who is risen,

thank you for the gifts you offer us today:

for the risen Son,

who leads the way for us,

teaching love and justice.

May we learn and live his way,

this day and every day. Amen.

Sing - Yours be The Glory (TIS 380)

So we sing. We often sing when we celebrate.

This hymn is one of the great celebrations of the church - and if you are familiar with it, you sing whatever version of the words is most familiar to you.

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.

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...

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...

Words: Edmond Louis Budry

Prayer of Praise and Confession

Our prayer this morning is interspersed with song.

We will sing it through for you - and then you might like to join in as we sing it throughout the prayer...

Sing - We Are An Easter People (Seasons 6)
We are an Easter people and alleluia is our song!
We are an Easter people
and alleluia, alleluia, alleluia is our song!

Words and Music: David Light

Living God,
today we come together in joy,
and in praise.
Jesus is risen,
Christ is with us today, and forever.
We thank and praise you for the joy this news brings.

Sing - We Are An Easter People (Seasons 6)

On this day we come together remembering and rejoicing
that though our saviour
was crucified, died, and was buried,
he rose again, bringing
joy to the sadness,
hope to the despair
and praise to the discouraged.
Help us to carry this wonder
with us, always, and never
forget what you have done for us.

Sing - We Are An Easter People (Seasons 6)

On this day, we come together with prayer in our hearts,
and joyful songs on our lips.
Jesus' promise is fulfilled.
Help us to take strength from the truth of the resurrection,
help us to remember that though we each travel through our own times of trial,
though the darkness may sometimes surround us,
your light will always shine.

Sing - We Are An Easter People (Seasons 6)

On this day, we come together, rejoicing in the gift of life,
sure in the truth of your presence within them.
Help us to remember that our lives are to be lived in Jesus' footsteps,
striving to love and to care for all whom we meet.
Give us the boldness to step forward
in faith and hope,
shouting with joy,
Christ is risen, Christ is risen indeed. Amen.

Adapted from Spill the Beans, Issue 42, Resources for Easter 2022, p.94

Sing - We Are An Easter People (Seasons 6)

Listening for God's Voice

Reading: Mark 16:1-8

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ²And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' ⁴When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' ⁸So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

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!

Video - Moderator's Message

<https://www.nswact.uca.org.au/resources/easter-2024/>

Reflection

God of the empty tomb,
speak to us now as you spoke to Jesus' disciples at the empty tomb,
surprise us once more,
reawaken our sense of awe at your life-giving work,
and give us renewed strength and courage to take the path you have shown us.
In the name of the risen Christ, we pray. Amen.

⁸So they went out and fled from the tomb,
for terror and amazement had seized them;
and they said nothing to anyone,
for they were afraid. (Mark 16:8)

I love this ending to the gospel attributed to Mark.

The women fled from the tomb in the grip of that emotion that is somewhere between amazement and terror.

The Greek word translated for us as "amazement" is ἔκστασις (*ekstasis*).

What does that sound like? "Ecstasy"

I reckon it might have been kind of like I feel when I am at the top of the roller coaster at a fun park. Absolutely terrified at the height, at the sudden vulnerability, at the unknown of the imminent rapid descent and really wishing I hadn't agreed to this - and yet somehow utterly amazed that I will come out the other end in one piece! Or even, once my head has caught up with all the other messages being sent by my senses and figured out that I am perfectly safe, it turns into an almost ecstatic experience! Wasn't that fun! Let's go again!!

The writer of Mark's gospel also ends this account by assuring us that the women told no-one! Well, we know that wasn't entirely accurate, now was it?!

At some stage, they must have told someone.

And all three other gospels try to set the record straight by letting us know that they did indeed tell Peter and John, and the other disciples who happened to be awake when they returned from their now-redundant funeral task.

But there is something in this about holding amazement and fear together.

Amazement at what God has done.

The tomb is empty.

"He has been raised; he is not here," says the figure who seems to be waiting for them (16:6).

Go - meet him in Galilee (16:7).

Could it be really true?!

And fear...

Fear of the unknown, perhaps.

Fear of change.

Fear of what the authorities might say or do when they discover that Jesus' body is no longer in the tomb.

We know that the disciples were pretty much in hiding - they are keeping the doors locked.

So I want to invite you, just for a minute, to put yourselves in the sandals of those women.

Just two days earlier, they had stood at the foot of Jesus' cross and watched him die.

They had accompanied the Nicodemus as he laid Jesus' body in the tomb and watched the stone being rolled shut.

They are grieving the death of a friend, a teacher, a healer - someone who showed them compassion and kindness.

They had come early to attend to the last of their duties in attending to Jesus' body.

And now they are met with an open tomb and a stranger telling them that Jesus is risen!

He is not here - he'll meet you back in Galilee...

How do you respond?

Fear - if this is true, then what does it mean for us?

And perhaps a whole heap of questions about how this could be - people don't usually rise from the dead - although they had witnessed Jesus raising others from the dead (Jairus' daughter (Mark 5 and Luke 8) and Lazarus (John 11)). And perhaps people don't often encounter God's messengers telling them that their friend will meet them back at home!

What will other people have to say about it?

Will it ask something of us that we are not ready for?

Amazement - wow! I wonder how long it took for their minds to catch up - for them to think through the things Jesus had said and did and figure out that he might have mentioned this once or twice - but, still, what does it mean...?!

So what does it mean for us today?

What does it mean for us to affirm belief in the risen Christ?

I mean, we don't get to stand before an empty tomb with spices in our arms, seeing, hearing, someone tell us what has happened.

But we do get to encounter the risen Christ - if we are open to that.

We do get to encounter love that transforms lives, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear, if we have hearts open.

We do get to experience hope that lifts us out of despair.

We do get to experience light shining in the darkest of places.

We do get to experience life when all seemed lost.

These encounters happen every time we offer a drink or a meal to someone who is hungry, or indeed when we are the receivers of hospitality; every time we embrace someone who is lonely or isolated, every time we hold the hand of someone who is ill or dying, every time we offer a kind word, a gentle touch, a helping hand, every time we think about our impact on the environment and choose to not buy plastic or make the effort to recycle or re-use, every time we speak up for justice, every time we gather around this table, reminded of the community of faith into which we are called, reminded of God's love for us and for all the world.

Just as Jesus embodied God's love and grace for the world, so he calls his followers to do the same.

And the call and response we use so confidently today...

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed!

That call and response not only identifies Jesus' followers, but it reminds us, calls us, and inspires us to live lives that reflect our encounter with the risen Christ, and to share such an encounter with the world we serve.

And it reminds us, calls us and inspires us that this path, is indeed the path to life in all its fullness.

In Christ, may you find the courage to join the ride!

Let us pray...

Living Christ,

an encounter with you is life-transforming,

may we be so transformed that we truly bear your light, love and grace in the world that those around us may also encounter your life-transforming presence. Amen.

Responding

Prayer for Others

Living God,

out of the darkness of death and human cruelty,

comes life, everlasting,

Jesus' tomb lays empty,

his friends wonder and worry, doubt and rejoice,

the light is in the world

now and forever,

and in this light we bring to you our prayers for others and ourselves.

As we gather today,
one in the long line of Christian communities,
celebrating Easter,
in troubling times in our lives and in our world,
some of us happy,
some of us sad,
some of us struggling
and some of us thriving,
we pray for ourselves,
that your love will embrace us and be our strength,
that we will walk always with Jesus on our hearts, on our minds, and on our lips.

On this day of celebration,
we bring to you prayers for all who are in pain,
all who are lost,
all who are struggling in a world of inequality,
help them to be bound up in your care,
to know your presence in this world and in their lives,
and help each of us to offer support in every way we can to all those in need.

On this day of rejoicing,
as we look back to the resurrection
and forward to your promised kingdom where peace will reign,
we bring to you prayers for all who are impacted by war and violence all over the world
and here at home.
Bring peace to the lives of all peoples,
bring justice to the broken hearted and devastated,
bring reason to the unreasonable,
and bring wisdom to all with the power to create change.

On this day of wonder,
we bring to you prayers for your church,
help us to remember why we join together,
in the midst of our singing and speaking,
our activities and our outreach,
our hopes and our dreams for an uncertain future,
help us to remember that we come together in your name,
to worship you and give you thanks,
this day and all days. Amen.

Adapted from Spill the Beans, Issue 42, Resources for Easter 2022, p.95

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.

Sing - Companions on The Journey (Seasons 8-8)

This song recognises the people around us here this morning, wherever we have come from, the risen Christ draws us together, around his table, companions on the journey of life.

*We are companions on the journey,
breaking bread and sharing life;
and in the love we bear is the hope
we share
for we believe in the love of our God,
we believe in the love of our God.*

We have been gifted with each other,
and we are called by the Word of the
Lord:

to act with justice, to love tenderly,
and to walk humbly with our God,
to walk humbly with our God.

*We are companions on the
journey...*

No longer strangers to each other,
no longer strangers in God's house;
we are fed and we are nourished
by the strength of those who care,
by the strength of those who care.

*We are companions on the
journey...*

Words and Music: Carey Landry

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Offering

This part of our service is not about the money.

*It is about considering how we will respond to what we have seen and heard and
experienced this morning, or perhaps throughout the week - how is God prompting you,
nudging you, inspiring you - and what will you do about it?*

Each one of us is precious.

Each one of us has something to offer in terms of resources - time, energy, skills, money.

How will you respond?

Life-Giving God, we respond to your love, to your life, with deep gratitude.

Receive all that we offer - our money, our time, our skills - and use us to bring your life to
the world we serve. Amen.

Sending

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

We go from here ready to use the gifts God has given us, and to share good news with the world we encounter.

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.

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...

*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!*

Christ is able to make us one,
at the table he sets the tone,
teaching people to live to bless,
love in word and in deed express.

Jesus lives again...

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Sending and Blessing

Today and everyday

As you look into the heart of another, try and recognise the touch of God.

As you look into the face of another, try and recognise the Christ within.

As you hear the words of another, listen for the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

And be blessed in the name of God, the source of all life and inspiration.

Be blessed in the name of the Christ whose risen life liberates our expectations.

Be blessed in the name of the Spirit as she breathes new life through us all. Amen.

Keree Casey, *Of Ash and Rainbows*, adapted

Liturgy drawn from:

- Amanda Nicholas, L3, Mediacom, resources for Easter Sunday 2024
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Rev Kath Merrifield
31 March 2024