

EASTER DAY

17TH APRIL 2022

Worship for 17TH APRIL 2022 (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

THE PREPARATION

Welcome to you all on this Easter Day to worship prepared by staff members from the South Warwickshire Methodist Circuit. The readings today will be read by the Rev'd Richard Wilde. The Rev'd Sally Jones is the preacher. I am the worship leader for this service – my name is the Rev'd Audrey Simpson

Call to worship

This is the day that the Lord has made;
we will rejoice and be glad in it
Wipe away your tears. He is risen!
Let us celebrate! Hallelujah!

Christ the Lord is Risen today!
He is risen indeed. Hallelujah!

Hymn: StF 309 - See, what a morning

1. See what a morning, gloriously bright
With the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;
Folded the grave-clothes
Tomb filled with light,
As the angels announce
Christ is risen!
See God's salvation plan, wrought in love,
Borne in pain, paid in sacrifice,
Fulfilled in Christ, the Man, for He lives,
Christ is risen from the dead!

2. See Mary weeping: 'Where is He laid?
As in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb;
Hears a voice speaking, calling her name:
It's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!
The voice that spans the years,
Speaking life, stirring hope,
Bringing peace to us,
Will sound till He appears,

For He lives,
Christ is risen from the dead!

3. One with the Father, Ancient of Days,
Through the Spirit
Who clothes faith with certainty,
Honour and blessing, glory and praise
To the King crowned with power and authority!
And we are raised with Him,
Death is dead, love has won Christ has
conquered;
And we shall reign with Him,
For He lives,
Christ is risen from the dead!

Stuart Townend (b 1963) and Keith Getty (b 1974) Words & Music © 2003 Thankyou Music
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David C Cook

A prayer of praise

Amazing God, we praise you that
from the silence of an empty tomb,
a message of joy has spread around the world.
From the brutality of a death on a cross,
healing love has touched the whole of creation.
From the initial uncertainty of the first disciples,
your Church has grown and reached out in faith
to all.

Thank you for Easter; thank you for life; thank
you for
everything.

Amen.

A prayer of confession

We are sorry, Lord, for the times when we stay in the tomb of

our lack of belief and fill it with our fear.

Forgive us, and release us to be your witnesses in your world today.

We are sorry for the times we are sceptical when others share

the power of the Resurrection in their lives.

Forgive us, and release us to be your witnesses in your world today.

We are sorry for the times when we live as if there were no Easter.

Forgive us, and release us to be your witnesses in your world today.

Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

Jesus is alive! **Jesus is alive!**

Death is overcome: **Jesus is alive!**

He is your one true Son: **Jesus is alive!**

We are freed from sin: **Jesus is alive!**

Our new lives can begin: **Jesus is alive!**

On this joyful Easter Day: **Jesus is alive!**

So let us sing and dance and rejoice.

Jesus is alive!

Amen.

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

New Testament Reading

Acts 10:34-43 (NRSV)

Gentiles Hear the Good News

Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does

what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

Gospel

John 20:1-23 (NRSV)

The Resurrection of Jesus

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. So 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.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did

not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and 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. They 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.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus 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.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus 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." ' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

Hymn: StF 306 – Now the green blade rises [StF 306 Now the green bladed rises - YouTube](#)

1. Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,
wheat that in the dark earth many days has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has lain:
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.
2. In the grave they laid him, Love who had been slain,
thinking that he never would awake again,
laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.
3. Forth he came at Easter, like the risen grain,
he that for the three days in the grave had lain,
quick from the dead my risen Lord is seen:
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.
4. When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
then your touch can call us back to life again,
fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

John Macleod Campbell Crum (1872 – 1958) Words © From The Oxford Book of Carols 1928 Oxford University Press. All rights reserved.

Sermon

An Easter Affirmation

This is the Good News –
The grave is empty,
Christ is risen.
HALLELUJAH!

This is the Good News –
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never put it out.
HALLELUJAH!

This is the Good News –
Once we were no people,
now we are God's people.
HALLELUJAH!

Christ is our peace,
the indestructible peace
we now share with each other.

(from *Stages on the Way*, Wild Goose Publications, © Wild Goose Resource Group).

Greetings to you all in the Name of our Risen Jesus. Wherever and whenever you are reading this service, I pray God's richest blessings be with you.

The affirmation above reminds us of the peace and strength that the joy of Easter Day brings. Christ is Risen! If there is one thing that I'm sure we all crave at the moment, it is the 'indestructible peace' that we read of above. I wonder what 'indestructible peace' means for you? Is it physical security, or mental wellbeing, or an absence of war, or something else entirely? Is it something that humans can provide for each other? Or is it something only God, through Jesus, can give us?

Peace has seemed elusive of late, hasn't it? No sooner did we appear to be coming to terms with the fact that Covid is here to stay, and making plans to live with that anxious reality, than a fresh

horror opened up before us, in the invasion of Ukraine. So, peace may have felt elusive for us lately, in these circumstances, and perhaps not just elusive but actually unattainable, unreachable. Perhaps you feel we have taken peace for granted in our own country – I know I certainly do. It was a shock to realise that peace for the United Kingdom is actually just as fragile as it is for many other countries of the world.

Stephen Cottrell, the Archbishop of York, has reminded us of the need to be not just peace-lovers but also peace-makers. On BBC Radio 2's *Pause for Thought*, right at the beginning of the conflict, he said:

How should we respond?

Well, here's three things all of us can do:

- 1. Be prepared to make sacrifices ourselves. Sanctions on Russia will also affect us. We have to be ready to pay that price.*
- 2. Offer generous humanitarian aid. Just think for a moment what it's like to be a young family living in the middle of Kyiv at the moment, sheltering from bombs in metro stations, fearing for the future. We must offer help.*
- 3. Be ready to welcome Ukrainian refugees into our country. And, make it easier for them to come.*

And, for me, there's a fourth. As a follower of Jesus Christ, I will be praying.

Yes, for an end to the madness of war and a withdrawal of Russian forces; but also because we people of faith believe prayer changes things, beginning with ourselves.

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus says, 'Your kingdom come', Lord, not the kingdoms of the world. 'Your will be done', not the will of despots and tyrants. Prayer helps us to see things differently; changes our perspective; helps us love our neighbour - our neighbours in Ukraine and Russia; strengthens our resolve.

Because Jesus doesn't just ask us to be peace lovers – that's relatively easy. He says, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

By doing these three things – maybe all four - we can begin to support Ukraine.

We can begin to make peace.

If the last two years, and these last two months, have shown us anything, perhaps it is that peace is not a passive state. It is more than an absence of trouble. It is a beautiful acknowledgement of the presence of God, and it has to be sought, and cherished. It just doesn't happen by itself. The Psalmists understood this. Psalm 34:14 reads 'Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it'.

When Mary arrived at the garden early in the morning, she would have felt far from peaceful. Her beloved Lord had been crucified; she was distraught, confused, grieving, desperate. Her fresh horror that morning was the discovery that someone had moved her Lord's body, and she did not know where they had taken him. For Mary, at that moment, it was the final act of desecration. It was now not possible for her Lord to be violated any more. So she stands outside the tomb, and weeps.

But with a single word – her own name – everything, *everything* changes. In verse 16 of John 20 we read 'Jesus said to her, "Mary!"'. There is so much contained in that one single word! Jesus' knowledge of her, her past, her future, her faith, her love for Jesus – all of this summed up in one word as the Risen Jesus speaks her name. Who can possibly imagine the rush of emotions that must have overwhelmed her at this point? Joy, fear, disbelief, and ecstasy must have all played their part. But when some time had elapsed, when she had had time to process even some tiny part of the tumultuous events that had just taken place, Mary must have been overwhelmed with a tremendous sense of astonishment, and relief, and *peace*. Perhaps she experienced then what later writers were to call

'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding' (Philippians 4:7).

Oh, if we could really grasp even the faintest sense of that 'indestructible peace'! What a profound effect it would have on our lives, on the lives of those around us, on our churches, on our Circuit, on Methodism as a whole. Mary's life was never the same again after Jesus spoke her name. Neither were the lives of the disciples, who were changed from a frightened little group hiding in a locked room to a convinced, courageous company of the faithful, after Jesus appeared and spoke the astonishing words 'Peace be with you'. How do we live out this indestructible peace in our own lives? How will we share this peace with those we know so desperately need it?

I pray that in this Easter season we will all be able to experience Christ's indestructible peace more deeply and more profoundly. **Amen.**

Hymn 3 STF 293 All heaven declares.

All heaven declares
The glory of the risen Lord
Who can compare with
The beauty of the Lord

Forever He will be
The Lamb upon the throne
I gladly bow the knee
And worship Him alone

I will proclaim
The glory of the risen Lord
Who once was slain
To reconcile man to God

Forever You will be
The Lamb upon the throne
I gladly bow the knee
And worship You alone

THE RESPONSE

Prayers of intercession

Let us pray for those for whom today is just another day:

those who have to work;

those who have not yet encountered the risen Christ;

those who do not celebrate his love.

For God gave his Son,

to show his love and bring life.

We pray for all who flee their homes in desperation,

and travel into an uncertain future.

Strengthen them on their journeys,

and keep alive their vision of finding a secure and welcoming home.

For God gave his Son,

to show his love and bring life.

Let us pray today for those who seek to make peace:

For politicians involved in peace talks

For those organising and staffing refugee centres

For those welcoming strangers to new countries and new ways

For God gave his Son,

to show his love and bring life.

Let us pray for those who grieve today:

those recently bereaved;

those for whom this is a time of anniversary;

those who wait beside a loved one who is dying.

For God gave his Son,

to show his love and bring life.

Let us pray for all in need throughout the world:

those without access to clean water;

those with insufficient food;

those who cannot access the health care that they need.

For God gave his Son,

to show his love and bring life.

Let us pray for each other and for ourselves, that we may have wholeness, peace and hope through the presence in our lives of the risen Lord.

For God gave his Son,

to show his love and bring life.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

We say 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

StF 297 Christ is alive [Christ is Alive, Let Christians Sing \(Singing the Faith 297 / StF297\) - YouTube](#)

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.

His cross stands empty to the sky.

Let streets and homes with praises ring.
His love in death shall never die.

Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
he comes to claim the here and now,
and conquer every place and time.

Not throned above, remotely high,
untouched, unmoved by human pains
but daily, in the midst of life,
our Saviour, with the Father reigns.

In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
he suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, though ever crucified.

Christ is alive! His Spirit burns
through this and every future age,
till all creation lives and learns
his joy, his justice, love and praise.

Brian Wren

THE DISMISSAL

Prayer & blessing

Risen Lord,
you always go before us – preparing the way,
leading us further along your path of life.
Today of all days, there is no more fear.
We praise and adore you! **Allelulia!**
Amen.

Christ,
who out of defeat brings new hope and a new
future,

fill you with his new life;
and the blessing of God the Father, God the Son
and God the Holy Spirit
be with you now and always. **Allelulia!**
Amen.

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