

## Notices

Easter gardens

Elders election

The Assembly Faith and Order committee have suggested that in these exceptional circumstances we are indeed able to share in communion. If you have some juice (or even water) and a piece of bread, you will be able to join in.

Birthdays

Welcome and Call to worship  
Happy Easter everyone! Wherever you find yourself, be assured that we can still find ways to share the joy of Easter – and it is perhaps even more important to do so.

Father God,  
we come to you  
because you turn doubt into hope,  
tears into laughter  
and fear into fearlessness.

We come to you  
because on Easter Sunday  
and on every other day,  
we can say, 'Jesus is alive!'

**Amen.**

**Praise:** Thine be the glory

<https://youtu.be/RbBOOmKMLml>

**Bible Story**

<https://youtu.be/HL8R158Ujp4>

**Praise:** See what a morning!

<https://youtu.be/6xM-fpXayUg>

**Short Activity:** Easter Emoji

If you have a smartphone, take a look at your emojis and either draw them on paper or use them within a message on your phones to create a storyboard. Find suitable emoji images to represent each key point and create a sequence of emojis to tell the Easter story. Take your time either now or after the service – there is no rush. When you're done text or Whatsapp them through to me! (07703330677)

**Offering:** Lord, although we cannot physically make our offerings this morning, we ask you to bless our varied ways of giving at this time: the envelopes, cheques and direct debits all ensure that your church continues to express your love and presence in our world. Amen

**Reading:** based on Matthew 28:1 – 10

It was early in the morning, on the first day of the week. Mary Magdalene and her friend, who was also

called Mary, were on their way to Jesus' tomb. As they drew near, they saw two guards sitting there.

Without warning, an angel came down from the sky like a bolt of lightning. He was dressed in dazzling white clothes, and the earth shook as he landed and rolled back the stone at the entrance to the tomb.

The guards were terrified! First, they shook with fear, and then they fainted. 'Do not be afraid,' the angel said to the two Marys. He was sitting on the stone. 'I know who you're looking for. You came to see Jesus, who was killed on the cross. He isn't here anymore; he's been raised from the dead. Come, and see where his body lay.'

The two Marys didn't know what to think. They were both scared of the angel, and excited by what he said. The angel continued speaking, 'When you have seen that Jesus is gone, go and tell the disciples the news. Jesus will go ahead of them to Galilee, and they will see him there.'

Still frightened, but also full of joy, the women ran from the tomb to find the disciples.\* They didn't get far, though, because suddenly, Jesus was there, standing in front of them.\* 'Greetings!' said Jesus. The women fell to the ground, took hold of Jesus' feet and worshipped him.\* Jesus spoke again. 'Do not be

afraid,' he said. 'Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee.\* They will see me there.'

**Praise:** Come people of the risen King!

<https://youtu.be/9j07fbld3uY>

**Sermon:** Afraid – yet filled with joy

Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would be standing in church on Easter Sunday morning, the most important day in the Christian calendar, gearing up to preach to an empty church! This situation has happened so quickly for all of us hasn't it?

One moment we were happily sitting around table for our All Age worship putting together our jars with stones, soil and an Iris bulb..... chatting together about the weather and other stuff, perhaps looking forward to meeting together with our friends after the service to catch-up on our news. We may well have been thinking about the possibility of some Spring sunshine in the coming days.

Of course we'd heard about this virus in Wuhan, but that was miles away, and at that stage simply someone else's problem. Little did we know..... Life changed in an instant, and suddenly we found ourselves in lockdown, and let's be honest, although we were putting on a brave face, what was happening was really quite scary.

Life for the disciples at the beginning of holy week was, let's be honest, tickety boo! Coming off a welcome like no other for their master into the city they and he loved so much, they were riding the crest of the wave! All round sentiment was positive – there was a feel-good factor in the air. Jesus had been welcomed as king – his ratings were the highest they had ever been.

It wasn't to last. Although he had often spoken to them of his impending sacrifice, they had brushed it off, carried away by the increasing numbers wanting to be close to him, to hear his words, to witness those amazing miracles!

Even in the garden of Gethsemane they seemed oblivious, but then came the arrest, the betrayal, the trials, the condemnation, the whipping, and the cross. It happened so quickly. It was all a bit of a blur – not dissimilar to the situation we're facing right now. These verses in Matthew mention the word "afraid" three times – the guards were afraid, the women were afraid, and finally Jesus urging them not to be afraid.

The guards were present at the trials that took place on Maundy Thursday. They were there as Jesus was whipped and scourged before the crowds. Maybe some of them partook in the beatings themselves. They probably walked alongside as Jesus struggled

to carry the cross piece up the hill to Golgotha. And they were there to witness his crucifixion and death. But when that angel appeared at the tombs entrance, scripture tells us that they were “so afraid that they shook and became like dead men.” Blind panic we may label the state they were in.

It's a feeling you and I have all experienced at different times in our lives, and listening to and reading daily reports on the awful impact of this virus, one can easily understand why this has unsettled us in the way it has. It is made worse by the plethora of social media reports, (coming from theological circles as well) suggesting that we are experiencing a dark time of introspection, moving toward certain death and destruction, forced to deal with many people who do not understand the gravity of the situation.

The woman who arrived early at the tomb were also afraid, but their fear quickly turned into nervous excitement as the risen Jesus told them to put their skates on and go and tell the rest the good news of resurrection! Maybe that's the feeling that should be ours on this Easter morning as we reflect with a mixture of fear and joyous celebration.

We need to hear this message very clearly this resurrection morning. God is not causing this pandemic, God is with us through it and possibly leading us into new and exciting ways of being

church! He is at work in the calls you are making to family, friends and neighbours. Perhaps these stay-at-home orders are really a kind of enforced Sabbath? What an opportunity to relax, spend time with family, and appreciate the many gifts God has given to us!

God is with you as you take those tentative steps in using Email, Skype or Zoom (the last time I used that word was when I consumed an ice lolly years ago!).

He is with you as you graciously accept the offer of help from that person down the road who you've never met (and He is with them as well!). He is with you as you wake up in the morning and try to plan yet another day confined to your home.

He is with you and others as you stand at your front door to clap for the carers and others who are doing so much good and helping us all get through this crisis.

God is with you as the phone rings and a cheery voice on the end of the line enlivens your day. Midst all these very different experiences we are having, resurrection happens! It's good, and it's something to celebrate!

Remember the jar we planted together just a few weeks back? This is what our one looks like now!

What started as the possibility of growth, has ended up with looking strong and healthy. This is what Easter is all about – Jesus is alive, and because of that fact, we can be filled with hope for the future.



Hold on to us, Lord, through this troubled time.  
Where there is sickness, may there also be health.  
Where there are tears, may there also be laughter.  
Where there is despair, may there also be hope.  
Where there is fear, may there also be trust. Where  
there is hardship,



may there also be help. Where there is doubt, may there also be faith. Where there is weakness, may there also be strength. Where there is defeat, may there also be victory. Where there is chaos, may there also be calm. Where there are problems, may there also be solutions. Where there is distancing in body, may there also be a coming together in spirit. Where there is death, may there also be life. Come, Lord, and work your miracle of love, out of darkness bringing light.

## **Easter Communion**

We Gather and We Celebrate

What are we to make of this day?

When graves are opened...

When the dead awaken...

When life refuses to be contained...

Then nothing is impossible!

Hope is never extinguished  
and love is never conquered.

We celebrate You today, Jesus,

Because You have made it clear that death  
does not have the last word;

Because You have filled us again with hope  
and faith;

Because You have given us a vision of new  
possibilities, new realities,  
and new ways of being.

Open our minds to believe what we cannot  
explain;

Open our hearts to hope for what we cannot see;

Open our lives to live and to love in the midst of death and despair;

Let resurrection happen again in us today.

Amen.

Resurrection happened because Christ was first prepared to die.

Defying death, He refused to release His hold on life and love.

So now, as He encouraged us, we choose to remember so that we too can truly live.

At supper on the night before He died

Jesus took bread and blessed it.

Then He broke it and gave it to His disciples saying:

This is my body, broken so that you may know life.

Eat it and remember Me.

After the meal Jesus took wine and blessed it.

Then He gave it to His disciples saying:

This is my blood, shed so that you may know life.

Drink it and remember Me.

So, now, Lord of Life, we share in this meal, we celebrate together,

and we remember You.  
And we will continue to do this until  
resurrection  
has flooded the whole creation.  
May this bread and this wine become for us in  
this moment  
your life-giving body and blood,  
And may we who share this meal, be joined  
with you,  
and with one another,  
as one body united in resurrection life,  
and sharing with all of creation in your eternal  
salvation.  
As we break this bread, we receive Christ's  
life  
In all our diversity, in all our individuality,  
as we share this one loaf  
we are one.

## **Benediction**

Take with you the joy of the risen Lord,  
and share the good news with all those you meet.  
Amen.

**Praise:** Christ the Lord is risen today!

<https://youtu.be/adTgqFlaqw0>