

**1. Welcome**

Good morning, welcome to you, scattered-gathered people of God – and at last: Happy Easter! A warm welcome to all who are joining with us online, anyone who is visiting us virtually for the first time. Thank you for celebrating this strange, joyful day with us. Christ is risen. **He is risen indeed.** [*Video: 'He is risen indeed!'*]

**2. Acknowledgement**

As is our custom, we begin by acknowledging the First Peoples of this land. Throughout Lent, we have done this in a spirit of self-examination and sorrow: today, we do it in renewed hope for a transformed world of love and justice.

We acknowledge the Wiradjuri people,  
the first inhabitants of this place.

**We honour them for their custodianship of the land  
on which many of us live, work and worship.**

We affirm again that though we are many –  
and though we are scattered by distance and circumstance –  
we are one Body in Christ, belonging to one another –  
Especially today.

**We greet and honour the risen Christ in each other.**

**3. Call to worship**

Our call to worship this morning is the strange, echoing call of an empty tomb. Come, it says: love has triumphed over death! Come, it says: a wild new hope is loose in the world! Come and see!

**God did a new thing. God is always doing a new thing!**  
**This is our strength for today; our hope for tomorrow.**

Behold: our deepest hope is fulfilled: death itself is conquered!

Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

4. **Hymn:** Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!  
(*Together in Song* #370, verses 1-3)

We can't generally post the words to hymns for copyright reasons.  
They can easily be found on-line – or in any hymn-book you have at home.  
If you would like to borrow one of the church's copies of *Together in Song* for home use during the 'shut-down', please contact us and we'll arrange to drop off a copy.

5. **Prayer of celebration**

What are we to make of this day?  
When graves are opened...  
When Life refuses to be contained...  
When love refuses to be silenced...

**Hope can never be extinguished –  
For nothing is impossible with God!**

We celebrate you today, risen Christ,  
Because you make it clear that death does not have the last word;  
you fill us again with hope and faith;  
you give us the possibility of a new beginning, a different ending;  
you draw us into a story that never ends...

**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, to dare and to dream.  
Let resurrection happen again in us today.  
Amen.**

## 6. Kids' focus

What is Easter about? At Easter time, we celebrate the fact that Jesus died – but then he was alive again – and his friends saw him, and spoke with him, and ate breakfast with him...

I guess we mostly think that Easter is about Easter eggs – don't we?  
And you know, that's not a bad picture of what happened with Jesus!

**[MAGIC TRICK:** Claire turns an Easter egg into a chicken!]

You see, sometimes things that look dead turn out to have a new kind of life in them! Like an egg, just sitting there all white and cold and still – and then suddenly – crackle, crackle, wobble, crack! There's a live chick, chirping and running around! Or how about this? A caterpillar goes into its cocoon and sleeps for ages and ages – and suddenly out comes a beautiful butterfly! Or how about this? A tree looks completely dead after a bush fire, blackened and stumpy – and suddenly, one day, new shoots come out and start growing – and it seems impossible, but the tree is *alive* again, and brings life to the birds and animals and insects, life to the bush, life and hope to people who thought they'd lost everything...

When we celebrate Easter, we remember that Jesus died – and came back to life again – so we can *know* that love never really dies, and that everything Jesus promised was true: that he would always be our friend – to death and beyond...

## 7. Hymn: Now the green blade rises (*Together in Song* # 382, verses 1, 3 and 4)

## 8. Affirmation of forgiveness

Friends, in this Easter season, we do not pray prayers of confession.  
For in raising Christ from the dead, God said 'Yes!' to life and joy,  
said 'Conquered!' to all the things that separate us from God,  
said 'Do not be afraid!' to all who would come to God to be healed...

Hear, then, the good news of Easter:  
More can be mended than we dare to dream.  
The stone is rolled away, and the Spirit of life is loose in the world.  
Do not dwell on your wounds, for Christ has risen to heal you.  
Do not dwell on your fears and failings,  
for Christ has risen to forgive you,  
has risen to draw you forward in newness of life.

And so we simply pray together:

**Risen Christ,  
May your resurrection life rise up within us,  
May your never-ending story sweep us ever higher up and deeper in...  
Amen.**

## 9. Scripture reading

Maureen Blake

### **Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 28, verses 1-10**

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning,  
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

And 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.  
His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow.  
For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men.

But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for  
Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come,  
see the place where he lay. Then 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."

So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!"

And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him.

Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee;  
there they will see me."

## 10. Message

“Do not be afraid.” It’s the first thing the angel says to the women at the tomb: ‘Do not be afraid’. Perhaps they were terrified at the earthquake; the sudden, unearthly light... Perhaps they were gripped by reverential awe in the presence of an angelic being... Perhaps, they dreaded what might have happened to their beloved Jesus... ‘Do not be afraid. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see...’

‘Come and see.’ Clearly, it is supposed to be *reassuring*: this empty tomb; these grave clothes lying limp where they had fallen; this reminder that Jesus had, after all, *promised* that he would see his friends on the other side of death... And perhaps it *was* reassuring, because the women leave the tomb – at least with *mixed* feelings: ‘With fear and great joy’, Matthew says. ‘They left the tomb quickly, with fear and great joy.’

Perhaps we recognise that *mixed* feeling this Easter, in the midst of a grief, a strangeness, an earthquake in our own world... Fear; anxiety; uncertainty; the radical shaking of life as we know it... Yet also – somehow, at the same time – joy: a mysterious, underlying, unquenchable joy. Because *the tomb is empty*. ‘He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.’

But friends, I wonder if even in the best and gladdest of times, this empty tomb should not still be a little fear-some; a little disturbing; a little world-shaking. It is, after all – lest we forget – a wild and dangerous thing to believe. Because: resurrection! If we think about it – if we *dare* to really *think* about it – it is liable to disrupt and disorient all our usual ways of making sense of the world; all our learned resignation about the inevitability of death; all our trust in the power of science to explain everything...

A wild and dangerous thing to believe... Because if God really raised Jesus from the dead, then Jesus really is who he said he was; love really is more important than being right, than being good, than being safe. If God really raised Jesus from the dead, then we really are called to live faithfully and vibrantly and self-givingly; we really are called to work with God – with the Spirit of the risen Christ – to bring life to others, and to mend all that is broken in the world...

A wild and dangerous thing to believe, in a world of loneliness and loss, suffering and sickness, helplessness and uncertainty... Because if Jesus really rose from the grave; if God has really said ‘Yes!’ to life through and beyond death – it confronts all our anger and fear and grief about the way the world is, the way that a *virus* appears to be able to turn our lives and dreams to dust... If Jesus really rose from the grave, then *hope* is alive, the story continues, and we don’t *get* to give up on relationships, or situations, or other people, or ourselves... Because Christ is alive – loose in the world – wild and uncontrolled and shouting too loud in public places about love and peace and justice and forgiveness and healing. Christ is alive – and resurrection keeps bursting out in small ways, in dark and unexpected places, even now... ‘Don’t be afraid,’ said the angel to the women at the empty tomb. ‘He is risen, just as he said. Come and see...’

Friends, this Easter, may we find the courage to come and see. May we allow ourselves to encounter the living Christ for ourselves, and hear his voice calling us to healing and hope, passion and purpose, and joy – yes, *joy*, even in the midst of our fear – because He lives. ‘Don’t be afraid. He is risen, just as he said. Come and see...’

**11. Video:** 'Who do you say I am? Mary Magdalene (Easter Morning)'

By the By The Skit Guys Studio. Purchased with usage licence, including *Streaming Rights* (by gracious permission of the rights owners, in response to the pandemic).

To watch a preview: <https://skitguys.com/videos/who-do-you-say-i-am-mary>

**12. Hymn:** Light's reddening dawn  
(*Together in Song* # 360, verses 1, 3 and 8)

**13. Prayers of the people**

Judy Tyson

Let us pray together on this unquenchably joyous Easter morning.

God of hope,  
At dawn today, the sun rose over our lock-downed land,  
yet we awoke with joy, knowing that Jesus is alive and with us forever.  
He has risen indeed and triumphed over all the brokenness of the world.  
On Good Friday we wondered if we would have been counted among the doubters  
and those that held back on the edges as silent observers.  
But today we realise that you, God, have rolled away the stone!  
Our deepest hope is not in vain –  
because Spirit of Resurrection is loose in the world!  
Christ is always with us; we are never alone.  
Alleluia, he is risen: he is risen indeed.

May the unquenchable life of Christ spill out of the tomb today  
and spread throughout the World.  
May it spread love and hope to the darkest corners of illness and fear,  
poverty and despair.  
We pray that this Easter, the world does not just see an empty tomb  
but experiences the presence of the risen Christ.

We pray that the love of Christ be seen in all countries  
struggling with the implications of the COVID-19 epidemic.  
May the love of the risen Christ spread to bring peace  
to those who have lost loved ones  
and been unable to see them in their final hours  
or attend funerals to honour them.  
Wrap your loving arms around all who mourn at this time  
and give them comfort to get through their distress.  
Many are going through dark times and fearful of what the future holds.  
Lord give them Easter hope that this *will* pass  
and we *will* come through stronger....  
We pray for all who are suffering illness or  
undergoing continued pain as scheduled operations are cancelled.  
Our prayers reach out to all health providers worldwide, as they work long hours at  
great risk, caring for others in an exemplary way.

We pray for families and friends who would usually be together at Easter but are isolated due to travel restrictions.  
May this quieter Easter be one of reflection and spiritual renewal.  
May families and friends reach out to one another in different and creative ways that bring a smile to the elderly and joy to all. May this Easter not be remembered by the size and number of Easter eggs, but by how people had time for one another, were kinder to one another and thought about the real meaning of Easter.

We pray that we can be the risen Christ, wherever we are.  
Help us to spread the Easter truth of love, hope, justice and peace.  
May all who watch this service in their homes know that they are loved by the risen Lord...  
May our Church and community be one of compassion where all feel welcome.  
Amen.

#### 14. Holy Communion

***Liturgy of the Empty Basket*** (by Rev. Claire Wright, adapting the liturgy from *Uniting in Worship 2 for Holy Communion, in order to be suitable for a dispersed community without access to bread or cup*)

The peace of the Lord be with you. (Shalom!)

Scattered-gathered family of God,  
Come to the table of the Lord – wherever you are – for all are invited.  
Come not because you are worthy, but because your soul is thirsty;  
Not because you are spiritual, but because your spirit hungers for a deeper connection – a communion – with God,  
And with the family of God across space and time.  
Come, because the one whom you seek has long sought you...

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Life-giving, life-sustaining God,  
Every living thing in the universe owes its life to You;  
All things, seen and unseen, have come into being by your creative word;  
We thank and praise you, O God, for you have made all things well.

Seeking and finding God,  
Your gifts of life are ours to enjoy;  
You made us in your image,  
You breathed life into each one of us;  
We live because you spoke our names.  
We live *again* because Jesus Christ lived – and died – and lived  
To set the Spirit of Life loose in the world.

Caring, comforting and connecting God,  
Your energising Spirit flows through every creature,  
And through each one of us;  
You have filled the world with your presence and your voice,  
You have filled our lives with your goodness and mercy.

**Open our hearts, O God,  
to remember and be thankful for all that you are,  
and all that you have given.**

We remember and are thankful – above all – for Jesus Christ,  
who invited himself in to homes and hearts,  
to eat and drink with all who sought him –  
in order to draw each and all into life-giving,  
life-changing communion.

For on the night he was betrayed, Jesus sat at table with his friends.  
He took bread, and after he had given thanks, broke it and gave it to them, saying:  
'Take and eat. This is my body, which is for you.  
Do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way also the cup after supper, saying:  
'This is the cup of the New Covenant in my blood.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

And so, scattered-gathered as we are, we come to *this* table, to do as our Saviour  
commands, celebrating the redemption he has won for us.

But this love feast cannot be as it is 'normally' is,  
for this time, this circumstance, is not 'normal'.  
At least, not for *us*...

So in this empty basket [*an empty basket is lifted and shown*],  
we choose to see the world's hunger.  
We remember that millions of people, this day,  
lack bread for Communion, bread for breakfast, bread for life.  
We acknowledge that we ourselves hunger, this day,  
in ways that no earthly bread can satisfy.

Hospitable God,  
**meet us in our unmet hungers**  
**– and help us to put our abundance at the service of the poor.**

In this empty cup [*an empty cup is lifted and shown*],  
we choose to see the world's thirst.  
We remember that millions of people, this day,  
lack wine for Communion, fruit for juicing, water for life.  
We acknowledge that we ourselves thirst, this day,  
in ways that no earthly cup can quench.

Hospitable God,  
**meet us in our unmet thirsts**  
**– and help us to put our fullness at the service of the empty.**

'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.' (Matthew 5:6)  
**In the name of Christ, Amen.**

God,  
pour out the Holy Spirit on this empty basket, this empty cup,  
that they may be for us – even in their emptiness –  
the body and blood of Christ,  
so that we may take his Life into our lives,  
and in our turn be taken and blessed,  
broken and given for the world,  
until the day when we can share bread and cup again, together,  
in a world restored by resurrection life.

And we say together the Lord's Prayer, in whatever language or version is closest  
to our hearts.

**Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be your name;  
Your kingdom come,  
your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread,  
And forgive us our sins,  
As we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
And deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,  
Now and forever.  
Amen.**

*[Empty basket is held out]*  
It is Christ who is the bread of life,  
Who satisfies the hungry heart, and makes us one.

*[Empty cup is held out]*  
It is Christ who is the cup of hope,  
Who revives the thirsty, and makes us one.

Christ, the gift of God, for the scattered-gathered people of God.

Therefore, in the self-giving love of Christ,  
receive this day what you hunger for.... *[Empty basket is offered...]*  
receive this day what you thirst for... *[Empty cup is offered...]*

*[Silence as we receive in our hearts...]*

Know and be assured that God is able to do infinitely more than all we ask or imagine... and to God be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20–21)

We thank you, O God,  
For the nourishment we receive at your table of belonging;  
For the invitation which brought us here and made us one –  
and which we now take with us into our troubled world:  
the invitation to all, to come to you and find Life.  
For Christ is risen. **He is risen indeed!**  
**Amen.**

**15. Hymn:** Yours be the glory!  
(*Together in Song #380, verses 1-3*)

**16. Blessing and sending out**

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed.

Therefore, filled with his life,  
May you be life-bringers in the world.  
Touched by resurrection,  
May you resist death and deadening wherever you find it.  
Enlivened by hope,  
May you embrace the promise of abundant life in Christ,  
and the call to make it known.

Go forth in the unquenchable hope, the irrepressible life and the irresistible joy of our Risen Lord, Jesus Christ, to love and serve him, and one another, and all the world. **Amen.**