Order of Service

# Easter Day: April 4th 2021

## Introduction

### Isaiah 25.6-9

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples

 a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines,

 of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines strained clear.

And he will destroy on this mountain

 the shroud that is cast over all peoples,

 the sheet that is spread over all nations;

 he will swallow up death for ever.

Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,

 and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,

 for the Lord has spoken.

It will be said on that day,

 Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.

 This is the Lord for whom we have waited;

 let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

### The Exsultet

Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of angels!

O Universe, dance around God’s throne!

Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!

Darkness vanishes forever!

The risen Saviour, our Lord of life, shines upon you!

Let all God’s people sing and shout for joy.

## Hymn: The day of resurrection

The day of resurrection!

Earth, tell it out abroad;

the passover of gladness,

the passover of God.

From death to life eternal,

from earth unto the sky,

our Christ hath brought us over,

with hymns of victory.

Our hearts be pure from evil,

that we may see aright

the Lord in rays eternal

of resurrection-light;

and listening to his accents,

may hear, so calm and plain,

his own ‘All hail’ and, hearing,

may raise the victor strain.

Now let the heavens be joyful,

and earth her song begin,

the round world keep high triumph,

and all that is therein;

let all things seen and unseen

their notes of gladness blend,

for Christ the Lord hath risen,

our joy that hath no end.

# Welcome

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:

he has given us new life and hope by raising Jesus from the dead.

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Welcome, everyone, and thank you for joining with us online and over the telephone on this glorious Easter Day. It is our joy to bring you this special time of worship. Although scattered, we give thanks that we are united in the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us pray.

Risen Lord Jesus,

we come to celebrate your triumph of love over hate,

your conquest of life over death,

your victory of good over evil.

Today the power of the cross is broken,

the power of fear and despair is defeated.

Because of today we can dare to hope, we can dare to believe.

Risen Lord Jesus,

open our hearts to receive you.

Bring your resurrection life to all that is dead in us,

your risen joy to all that makes us sorrowful,

and bring your love to transform our living and loving

so that all your children may come to know you to be their life, joy, hope and love.

Amen.

## Collect

God of glory,

by the raising of your Son

you have broken the chains of death and hell:

fill your Church with faith and hope;

for a new day has dawned

and the way to life stands open

in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

# Gospel

## John 20.1-11

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.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb.

## Reflection

That which was loved, and was broken and had died,

swaddled in sheet and shroud;

that which had been given and was tenderly

lifted out of this unstable world;

retreating from the pressing crowds,

as scars and smiles and starlight blur,

in silence lies alone.

That which was lost, and was taken and has gone,

which was mourned in grief and comes to grief again:

that gift so tightly held, so quickly sprung,

that life to earth returned,

that story finished, fading, done;

whose echo fills the empty tomb

where the eternal word seems stopped,

in silence

In darkness, he saw and believed, but did not understand.

In our confusion, guide us.

In our sorrow, comfort us.

In our anger, forgive.

In our despair, renew.

Take those linens from our hands, those trappings of things

which will not return, but must first be sown.

Where we cannot grasp, may we be shown, believe

and leave the heavy tomb and risk the rising sun

to kiss wet cheeks, and hear one speak

our name. Not a repeated word, but something new

is heard by her who stands, and weeps, and waits.

## John 20.11-18

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, ‘Rabbouni! 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.

# Homily

Let us be glad and rejoice in the Lord's salvation. (Isaiah 25.9)

I am delighted to be sharing this service with you, and a very happy Easter to you all.

When re-reading chapter 20 of John's gospel, I am particularly struck by two things, maybe three.

Firstly, there is the running. Mary comes to the tomb where Jesus was laid, and it is before first light. It doesn't say that she looked inside, but on seeing the stone rolled away she runs back to alert the disciples. Then Peter and 'the other disciple' (the other disciple presumably being John, the ascribed author of the gospel himself in an act of autobiographical modesty) run back to the tomb. John is clear to tell us that he won this race, mentioning it twice, you'll notice! But this first Easter Day begins with some frenetic activity. It didn't begin with prayer or worship, no quiet time or meditation, but some charging around in search of one another and their missing Lord.

Seeking and searching are a fundamental part of the life of those who choose to follow Christ. 'Seek and you shall find', says Jesus. 'Seek first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be given to you as well'. When did we stop searching for God, exerting ourselves in our explorations of the Divine? When did we become so passive?

Secondly, I've always been struck by the condition of the empty tomb. Jesus has been a deceased guest in a stranger's grave. Jesus, who presents as the host in almost every given situation, now surrenders to be cared for in the space of death. But the tomb has opened and death has been conquered by a love that can not be killed, and Jesus appears to have been the perfect guest.

The linen wrappings have been left lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head has not been thrown aside, but is now 'rolled up', carefully placed, like the visitor who makes their own bed before leaving. It is the small things. There is a gentle and determined courtesy about this act. It makes me think that, whilst everyone else's response is to charge around, Jesus has taken his time, acting with thought and purpose and care.

Finally, what I love about this passage is that, after the running and the panic, we are left with Mary outside the tomb, weeping over the absence of the one whom she loves. There is something tender about her tears. She is not there to do theology, to search for meaning in this monstrous situation, or to make a point. She is present at the last place she will have seen him, pouring out her love, her grief, her passion for the man who embraced her back into his family of followers. This is not head to head, but heart to heart, perhaps the way that all prayer might be. If we could only begin to truly grasp the situation, perhaps we would weep too – weep with gladness, weep with rejoicing, weep at our own will rejection of love, weep because the Lord offers, even us, salvation.

The resurrection was not an intellectual adventure to understand, or, in the moment, a scriptural inevitability to be uncovered. It was a gut-wrenching, heart-breaking, life-changing shock. Bewildered by the ongoing surprise of God, maybe our only true response can be tears. Through snot and sobs we are delivered, the world as we know it has pivoted, death has become life, hate met with love, the running turned to weeping, and we are invited to live Christ's story of hope that came with the breaking of that day.

Let us be glad and rejoice in the Lord's salvation (Isaiah 25.9)

Thanks be to God. Amen.

# Affirmation of faith

Let us affirm together the faith of the church.

We believe and trust in God the Father,

source of all being and life,

the one for whom we exist.

We believe and trust in God the Son,

who took our human nature,

died for us and rose again.

We believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,

who gives life to the people of God

and makes Christ known in the world.

This is the faith of the Church.

This is our faith.

We believe and trust in one God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

# Intercessions

In our rejoicing, bounded by sadness,

in our hope, limited by our perspective,

together we pray to the one whose love has no end,

and whose compassion for creation is everlasting.

We pray for those, here and around the world,

who are suffering in the pandemic:

for those who are isolated or lonely,

those who are sick and those who watch over them,

those who cannot access health care,

those whose livelihoods and wellbeing have been affected,

for ourselves, for each other, for all who suffer.

Risen Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who suffer violence or injustice

at the hands of the greedy and the fearful;

for those whose lives are impoverished by unthinking prejudice.

Where we have been blessed with much,

may we share with others,

since Christ died for all, and lives in all.

Risen Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for those whose lives are affected by climate change:

for those whose traditional sources of food and water are threatened;

those who have lost homes and communities to fire or flood;

those whose land has been taken to provide profit for others.

Lord Jesus, who shared in our humanity,

strengthen us to cherish all creation.

Risen Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for all who mourn.

May they find comfort and hope

in the resurrected Christ who wipes away every tear.

We give thanks for the lives of those we have loved

and who have gone to their eternal rest.

Risen Lord, hear our prayer.

Hear our prayer, risen Lord.

Open our hearts to your love and

fill us with your Spirit,

that we may work for righteousness

and, filled with your abundant life,

may receive and share the hope and joy

of your glorious resurrection.

## 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.

# Hymn

Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,

endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won;

angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,

kept the folded grave-clothes where thy body lay.

*Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,*

*endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.*

Lo! Jesus meets us risen from the tomb;

lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom.

Let the church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,

for her Lord now liveth; death hath lost its sting.

No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of Life!

Life is naught without thee: aid us in our strife.

Make us more than conquerors through thy deathless love.

Bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above.

# Blessing

God the Father

by whose love Christ was raised from the dead,

open to you who believe the gates of everlasting life.

God the Son,

who in bursting the grave has won a glorious victory,

give you joy as you share the Easter faith.

God the Holy spirit,

whom the risen Lord breathed into his disciples,

empower you and fill you with Christ's peace.

And the blessing of God almighty,

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

be among you and remain with you always.

# Hymn

Up to the hill of Calvary

my Saviour went courageously

and there he bled and died for me.

Hallelujah for the cross!

And on that day the world was changed;

a final, perfect lamb was slain.

Let earth and heaven now proclaim,

hallelujah for the cross.

Hallelujah for the war he fought.

Love has won, death has lost.

Hallelujah for the souls he bought.

Hallelujah for the cross.

What good I've done could never save,

my debt too great for deeds to pay

but God, my Saviour, made a way.

Hallelujah for the cross.

A slave to sin, my life was bound

but all my chains fell to the ground

when Jesus' blood came flowing down.

Hallelujah for the cross.

Hallelujah, hallelujah

And when I breathe my final breath

I'll have no need to fear that rest

this hope will guide me into death.

Hallelujah for the cross.