

Easter Celebration Written Service – 5th April 2026

Call to Worship: -

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**

Hallelujah, Christ the Lord is Risen Today, Hallelujah. **Amen.**

Hymn: - STF 293 – All Heaven Declares

1 All heaven declares
the glory of the risen Lord;
who can compare
with the beauty of the Lord?
For ever he will be
the Lamb upon the throne;
I gladly bow the knee,
and worship him alone.

2 I will proclaim
the glory of the risen Lord,
who once was slain
to reconcile us to God.
For ever you will be
the Lamb upon the throne;
I gladly bow the knee,
and worship you alone.

Noël Richards (b. 1955)
and Tricia Richards (b. 1960)
Words and Music: © 1987, Thankyou Music

Prayers: -

We lift up our hearts, We lift up our thoughts, We lift up our voices, We lift up our souls, Recognizing afresh all you have done for us in Christ. We rejoice in the message of this day, The good news at the heart of our faith, Light after darkness, Joy after sorrow, Good after evil, Life after death.

May the truth of the resurrection inspire us with new hope. May the victory of Christ fill us with new joy. May the reality of his presence fill us with new faith. And so may we serve you with new vigour, To the glory of your name, Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Prayer of Confession: -

If we have fallen into despair, **Lord, forgive us.**

If we have failed to hope in you, **Lord, forgive us.**

If we have been fearful of death, **Lord, forgive us.**

If we have forgotten the victory of Christ, **Lord, forgive us.**

Silence (Pause)

May the living God, raise *us* from despair, give *us* victory over sin and set *us* free in Christ. **Amen.**

Hymn:- STF 353 – Jesus is Lord Creation's voice proclaims it

1 Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it,
for by his power each tree and flower was
planned
and made.
Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it;

sun, moon and stars in heaven cry: Jesus is Lord!

Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!

Praise him with alleluias, for Jesus is Lord!

2 Jesus is Lord! Yet from his throne eternal
in flesh he came to die in pain on Calvary's tree.
Jesus is Lord! From him all life proceeding —
yet gave his life a ransom, thus setting us free.

3 Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror,
from death he rose; and all his foes shall own
his name.

Jesus is Lord! God sends his Holy Spirit
to show by works of power that Jesus is Lord.

David John Mansell (b. 1936)

Words and Music: © 1980 Springtide

Reading John 20: 1 - 18

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. **2** So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!' **3** So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. **4** Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. **5** He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. **6** Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, **7** as well as the cloth that had been wrapped round Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. **8** Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. **9** (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) **10** Then the disciples went back to where they were staying. **11** Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb **12** and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. **13** They asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying?' 'They have taken my Lord away,' she said, 'and I don't know where they have put him.' **14** At this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise that it was Jesus. **15** He asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?' Thinking he was the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.' **16** Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' She turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means 'Teacher'). **17** Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."' **18** Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Sermon: -

**Have you ever Overcome Something – that you thought was truly impossible?
Maybe you have accomplished something you didn't think was possible.**

For me it was reading the Bible in Church! As a child with Dyspraxia and Dyslexia, lots of the words seemed impossible to read, and really struggled to read to my early years. But on Easter Sunday in 1994 I read part the passage set for today, with some very supportive help from my Mum.

This morning I want to talk you about this most extraordinary text, this extraordinary truth – Christ has overcome Death, Christ has overcome the world. **Alleluia – Christ is Risen – he is Risen indeed, Alleluia.**

When we think about being Transformed by the Cross, there are three aspects of the story that I want us to focus on: Mary's Reaction – to the Rolled Away Stone and her Encounter with the Gardener (Jesus) Go and Tell – Mary's instinct is to GO AND TELL "I Have seen the Lord", some of the Disciples need to see for themselves, and then they go and do likewise.

Finally – "Don't Hold onto me". Jesus command is simple and direct – we must Go and make disciples – we are ready, we don't need to hold onto Jesus and keep him for ourselves, until we are called to heaven our task is to share Jesus with the world that sorely needs him.

So How must Mary and the Disciples have felt on that first Easter Morning? In the dark of the early dawn, painfully, tearfully, walking towards the tomb, reflecting on the horrific scenes she witnessed yesterday. Only to find – Oh My Goodness – the Stone of the tomb is rolled away! She must have been deeply grieved, confused – beside herself with a mix of anxiety and desolation. Plus that gut wrenching, searching question – **what has happened to Jesus?**

The fiery hope that Christ had installed in her and all his followers was now a dim and dying ember, blowing in the wind. Then at the tomb she encounters a man, she doesn't recognise him, she thinks he is the Gardener. 'Sir' she says – if you know what they have done, where they have taken my lord, **you must tell me** – you can hear the pain and anguish in her voice. Then Jesus says the word that unlocks it all – “MARY” – called by Name, by the Risen Jesus Mary knows instantly and without question or query it is Jesus . **Now Place** yourselves in the seen, you are frantic, worried, scarred, and bump into this man, and he calls you by name “Josh, Eric, Susan, Clare, Mary, Sam, Wendy, Helen, Arnold, Gillian, Sally . . . so on and so on”. Mary's Response is to call out “Rabboni” – Teacher – for she now know her Lord, Saviour and redeemer Lives. All the promises have been fulfilled.

Next I think its important that we remember that front and Centre of this Easter encounter of Mary and Jesus, is that call that God makes on us to GO and TELL, to GO and SHARE the good news. Mary Exclaims “I have seen the lord”. First you are called by name, then the truth is revealed, and then you must share that truth – Transformed by the power of the Cross. Death could not hold Jesus – and so his Death should not hold us from sharing the Good News of his Resurrection – Alleluia We pray that God will give us many opportunities to declare “I have seen the Lord and I have been transformed” to those we encounter in his name.

Finally then, we are called “Not to hold onto Jesus”. As I said a moment ago if we are truly transformed by the Cross, By the Love poured out, By sacrifice willingly offered for our sin, By the power of the Holy Spirit, to overcome all things, even Death on the Cross. Then we need to Share Jesus, Share God, Share Hope & Love with the world. In our world where violence, pain, hatrd, despair, fear, corruption, lies, racism, sexism, homophobia and terrorism reign supreme – my Goodness they need the Light, Love, Hope and Peace of our redeemer, to help them capture a glimpse of the Freedom of the Kingdom of God. Just as Mary testifies to the resurrection, so we are called to live out a resurrection life, as individuals and as a community of faith.

Today, we need to be disoriented and deconstructed to let resurrection break through. We need to get on board, with a resurrection life, practicing resurrection by being awakened to God's resurrection power and opening our eyes to the wonders of new life. Surely this is the day that God has made – let us rejoice and be transformed in it! **Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession: -

In the power of the resurrection we offer our prayers to God. Let us pray.

Remember, O Lord, in your love the Church throughout the world . . . those recently baptized and confirmed . . . those who minister to others . . .

May your whole Church know your power and be a sign that Christ is risen. Lord of life, **hear us in your love.** Remember in your love the world you have made . . .those who seek a fair and proper use of the world's resources . . . those who strive for justice and peace among the nations . . .

May the whole earth be transformed by mercy and rejoice in hope. Lord of life, **hear us in your love.**

Remember in your love those who suffer . . . the victims of violence and injustice . . . those who mourn . . . May all in need find comfort, strength and freedom in the living Christ. Lord of life, **hear us in your love.** Gracious God, we ask these prayers through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Saviour. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer: -

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

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: - STF 313 – Thine be the Glory

1 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.*

2 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:

3 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:

Edmond Budry (1854–1932)
translated by Richard Birch Hoyle (1875–1939)

Blessing

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, strengthen *us*, to walk with him in his risen life.

The Blessing of Almighty God, Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Be with you all, with those you love, And those you are called to love in the name of The Risen Christ, now and forever more. **Amen.**