

Dorset South & West Circuit. Written Service.
Sunday April 12th 2026.
Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.



Call to Worship.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
1 Peter 1:3

STF 295

Alleluia, alleluia,
give thanks to the risen Lord,
 alleluia, alleluia,
 give praise to his name.

Jesus is Lord of all the earth;
he is the King of creation:

Spread the good news o'er all the earth:
Jesus has died and has risen:

We have been crucified with Christ;
now we shall live for ever:

God has proclaimed the just reward:
new life for all! Alleluia!

Come, let us praise the living God,
joyfully sing to our Saviour:

Prayers of adoration and confession

Risen Lord, you came to the disciples in that Upper Room, in spite of those locked doors of doubt. You brought them peace and wholeness in the darkest of times with the light of your resurrection putting their frightened minds at rest and making them ready for the task you had for them. We pray that you may make us ready in our worship and in our lives, to allow you to walk through the closed doors and walls of stone that we so often have and the barriers that we create. Take away our fears. Open our hearts that your Holy Spirit may come again to rest within us, that we, your people, may be ready to hear your words and respond to your call to bring the light of your resurrection in the darkest places of our world. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession

God who loves us we seek forgiveness. You call us to trust that Jesus lives. Forgive our doubting. Help us to trust you.

You call us to trust what we have not heard; Forgive our doubting. Help us to trust you.

You call us to trust what we have not seen. Forgive our doubting. Help us to trust you.

You call us to trust what we have not touched. Forgive our doubting. Help us to trust you.

You call us to trust each other. Help us to believe despite our doubts and fears. Help us to receive your peace. and to be at peace with you and each other. **Amen.**

Bible reading. John 20:19-31

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Reflection

I am sure that we all know the immortal words from the comedian who played the lead character Victor Meldrew, in *One foot in the Grave*.... "I don't believe it!" Often said because he had caused chaos and he was blaming the bizarre outcome that he had earned, on the fault of others. It wasn't that he doubted his own eyes as we might if we were using the phrase. He just couldn't accept his part in his own downfall. Now Thomas is a world apart from our dear Victor and the situation that seemed so bizarre for Thomas is indeed a grave issue. However the words are almost similar.... "I don't believe it!", "I will not believe it". What Thomas asks for is even more macabre than any of Victor M's misdemeanours. I don't imagine for one moment Victor with all his crazy antics would insist on putting his fingers into the wounds of someone's hands or his hand into the gapping wound in a person's side. Poor Thomas, so wrapped up in his grief that he cannot accept that the impossible seems to have happened. Christ has risen from the dead, Alleluia!

Today is often called Low Sunday. Mainly because of the contrast from all the joy and excitement that we share year year by year and mark as Easter Sunday. Today can seem a little low. We might have been fortunate enough to have shared in some way the joy and celebration with family and or friends. Family feasting and chocolate indulging. This Sunday, well it's back perhaps, to the old routines.

I also think that it's called Low because as in our bible passage the disciples are trying to come to terms with all that has happened and a future unknown and rather frightening. That first line of our reading really paints a vivid picture of how life had changed for the disciples. 'On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders,'. The disciples had witnessed the horror of Jesus' capture and his death. They had seen him lain in the tomb. The Jewish leaders wanted to eradicate all Jesus' followers. We can't begin to imagine their fear. They had gone from a privileged group of Jesus' closest friends with all the joy that had brought them, to locking themselves away for fear of what might happen to them.

Did you notice that the passage of scripture said, 'Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.' So not all of them had locked themselves away. Thomas, so sadly called the "doubter". 'Doubting Thomas!' He actually was outside of the locked away group. We don't know where he was or what he was doing. But he should be given the 'benefit of the doubt'. Perhaps Thomas the brave, might be more appropriate. Trying to pick up the pieces and get on with life? That's not to say that the other disciples were continually locking themselves away, we only know that it was on the evening of the first day of the week.

I wonder what their conversation would have been about as they huddled together behind that locked door? There are times when we all have been there, symbolically locking ourselves away from things we don't want to face. I heard someone say to an older lady on holiday alone, three years after her husband's passing. "You are so brave!" A kind word but so odd? So what is the alternative for this woman? Lock her self away, don't go out, after all you're alone now!

I guess the first time she did anything on her own and in subsequent events there is that bravery that says I can do this even though I'm alone. We can probably warm to her situation as we all at different times and in different ways experience aloneness and low periods in our lives. What is the answer? Lock the symbolic doors and keep the world out? No!

Our disciples had the support of each other behind their locked door. It's Thomas who is dealing with things alone. He wasn't with them, one of the twelve we are told. We cannot avoid the fact that he was also the only one to stand up and confess his doubts. Quite forcibly!

So often we doubt our own faith because something has caused us to question our beliefs. Often when tragedy comes knocking at our door. "If God is a God of love.....then why?" We regret the words but can't deny their reality at that particular time or moment. "I don't believe it..." and yet there is a glimmer of hope in those words, almost a questioning in the 'believe it'. For Thomas it was a rejection of what the disciples were saying, "I will not believe it," says Thomas.

Doubting is not wrong, no matter how forceful our doubts are expressed. If anything they are a sign that we are exploring our beliefs and weighing everything up. For Thomas he could have just responded with to the disciples words with a closed comment; like, "utter nonsense." Instead he uses that word 'believe'. Thomas is not wilfully refusing to believe, he is simply stating his scepticism and wanting proof, hard facts to prove what the disciples were saying.

There are endless examples of how we have explored our own doubts about a plethora of life's struggles and doubted we could ever overcome those experiences. We can have all the proof laid before us but getting over our own fears and doubts is another matter. A simple example is learning to swim. I have been privileged to learn and conquer my own fears at a young age. I have also been fortunate to help others to conquer their fears and enjoy the benefits of swimming. I recall one gentleman much fitter and more mature than me, a man of some standing in his profession, but a quivering wreck standing in the shallow end of a swimming pool. No childhood trauma to feed his fear of water. Just a total disbelief that the water would hold him up despite

seeing the numerous people around him enjoying the pool. Fortunately over a few sessions he learned to trust and to swim. That's a very simple example and there are a myriad of examples that we have had to explore and to overcome and often it's about trust and letting go, but that can only happen when we are real with our doubts, own them and explore them, whether about life situations or indeed our faith. We need never to find ourselves so low that we feel like we are locked away, alone with our fears and doubts. The wonderful reality of Jesus' resurrection is that He is always with us. He comes to us in our lowest moments and when we open our eyes to His presence, he says, "Peace be with you".

Then in our scripture we see another description of Thomas, 'Confessing Thomas'. He doesn't need to do all those horrible proof tests. In the presence of the risen Jesus Christ he in response to Jesus' words, proclaims "my Lord and my God". Jesus does not rebuke him for doubting instead he is telling him to move on, believe.

I wonder if today might be called low Sunday because as we move on from Easter Sunday, as we look at the the world and ourselves, it's like we are stuck in a Good Friday world, only it doesn't feel good. We can often feel we are stuck and feel so low because nothing seems to change. Looking at the reality of the experience's of Jesus' resurrection and appearances, nothing seems to have changed. The Jewish leaders still wanted to eradicate the followers of Jesus. Would they have crucified him again? Indeed isn't that what happens time and time again in the horrors of life?

I guess we need to examine what we focus on? Are we glass half full or glass half empty people? I don't recall any episodes of Victor Meldrew being a glass half full person? If anything, and I recognise he's a fictional character, but he probably expects a glass full to the brim every time and to get exactly what he feels he is owed. To be a glass half full person means we accept that life is not perfect but there is the possibility of more room in our lives and our world. More of the quality of life Christ promises and gives daily without our deserving it.

Despite everything that might be happening to us, Jesus stands amongst us bringing us a peace that the world can never give nor take away. By believing we have life in his name. His resurrection is constantly happening recreating our world in unexpected and unimaginable ways.

Do you know the end of Thomas' story? Do you know where he died? He died in India. He was the apostle to the people of India. He brought the gospel of Christ to India. He died a martyr after he was run through with five spears by five soldiers. That doesn't sound much like a doubter, does it? It sounds like someone who grew and changed, someone for whom the resurrection of Christ was real, someone for whom the empty tomb made a difference. It just took a little time, as it does for most, maybe all of us. Thomas moved from a position of belief to doubt. To, I will not believe to, I believe and I will use that belief so that others might come to know that belief and have life. A life of the Peace that Christ alone can bring. Thanks be to Him.

From the website STF+

1. When our futures are uncertain,
when our Christian life is tough,
when our worries fill our thinking,
when our hope is not enough –
then the rallying cry of Thomas
rises high above the crowd:
'Give your lives, your all, for Jesus.
Join him on this narrow road.'

2. When the many signs confuse me -
aimless wanderings fill my day -
then I pray the prayer with Thomas:
'Gracious Lord, show us the way.'
Suddenly the spell is broken!
Truth and Life in Christ, I see:
'I'm the way that you are seeking,
Come, disciple, follow me.'

3. When I miss the great adventure,
When belief is too absurd -
deep inside, I need, with Thomas

simple faith to be assured.
Then, the resurrected Jesus
brings to me his hands and side.
Overwhelming love engulfs me!
Death is dead and Christ's alive!

4. Come, inspire this feeble vision,
put your daring in our minds:
words to motivate disciples,
lives that challenge humankind.
Like Saint Thomas, full of passion,
clear our gloom that we may see -
Christ, our Lord, alive forever!
Christ, my God, alive in me!

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Suggested tunes: Scarlet Ribbons (StF 131); Jesus calls us (StF 28); Calon Lân (StF 323i)

Prayers of Intercession

Risen Lord, no door is closed to you, no heart is barred to you, no mind is shut off from you. Come lead us out of darkness into light, out of doubt into faith, out of death into life in all its fullness:

We pray for all who witness to your resurrection, for those who speak of your presence, for preachers and ministers of the Word, for those who minister in community; for those who reveal your presence by the way they live, for all who live simply that others may simply live. We pray for all who are in doubt and for all who are seeking you. We pray for unity in the Church and in the world.

Lead us out of darkness into light, out of doubt into faith, out of death into life in all its fullness:

We come today as we think of those who are behind closed doors. We think about all those who have lost their freedom, all who have lost hope. We pray for all who have been imprisoned because of their beliefs; that in the darkness they may find your love.

Lead us out of darkness into light, out of doubt into faith, out of death into life in all its fullness:

We pray for any fellowship to which we belong, for communities and clubs, for social groups, for our church and Circuit. We give thanks for your appearing in the Upper Room, and pray for our homes and those we love.

Lead us out of darkness into light, out of doubt into faith, out of death into life in all its fullness:

We remember all who are despairing, all who lack confidence, those afraid to trust themselves or others. We remember all who are lonely, all who are fearful.

We pray for those in sickness, looking to you in hope. Come lead us out of darkness into light, out of doubt into faith, out of death into life in all its fullness. These prayers, and the unspoken prayers of our hearts we ask in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

We say the Lord's Prayer.

STF 303

I know that my Redeemer lives -
what joy the blest assurance gives!
He lives, he lives, who once was dead;
he lives, my everlasting Head!

He lives, to bless me with his love;
he lives, to plead for me above;
he lives, my hungry soul to feed;
he lives, to help in time of need.

He lives, and grants me daily breath;
he lives, and I shall conquer death;
he lives, my mansion to prepare;
he lives, to lead me safely there.

He lives, all glory to his name;
he lives, my Saviour, still the same;
what joy the blest assurance gives,
I know that my Redeemer lives!

The Blessing

May you find in the risen Lord the way to fullness of life, the way to joy and peace.
And the blessing of God Almighty Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Be amongst us and remain with us, This day and for evermore. **Amen.**



He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " Luke 24:6-7



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