

twelvebaskets



EASTER SUNDAY A

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

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Easter Sunday - Year A
12th April 2020



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

297 STF – Christ is alive! Let Christians sing OR

309 STF – See, what a morning, gloriously bright

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

298 STF – Christ the Lord is risen today; Alleluia! OR

305 STF – Low in the grave he lay

Readings: Acts 10:34-43; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-18

Hymn:

306 STF – Now the green blade rises OR

296 STF – Christ has risen while earth slumbers

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

295 STF – Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord OR

307 STF – On the day of the resurrection

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

311 STF – The day of resurrection, earth, tell it out abroad! OR

313 STF – Thine be the glory

Blessing

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Call to Worship

Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed!
Alleluia!

The Lord's day is here, and we are here to celebrate the resurrection.

We have gathered here, come amongst us, Holy Spirit.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

297 STF – Christ is alive! Let Christians sing OR

309 STF – See, what a morning, gloriously bright

Opening Prayers

God of love, on this Easter Day we celebrate, once again,
the fact that your love cannot be destroyed.

We thank you that grief was turned to joy,
but we also remember today those whose grief is still strong and powerful,
whose memories are painful and for whom life seems to hold no joy at all.

We pray that they may be comforted and held in your love and care.

We thank you that despair was turned to hope,
but we also remember today those who live with very little hope,
in situations of conflict, poverty or distress, over which they have no control.

We pray that they may be strengthened and encouraged by knowing that you have
not forgotten them.

We thank you that the dark days were cancelled by that bright dawn and the promise
of new life.

So we remember today those for whom life holds little brightness, or promise.

But we remember, too, that this good news of life beginning again was entrusted to
those ordinary women and men who had known Jesus,
and who were now given the task of continuing his work,
with that same spirit of love and compassion shown by him in his lifetime.

So as we celebrate today,
the difference that resurrection can still make to so many lives,

¹ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

help us to take on our responsibility
to pass on that good news with renewed enthusiasm,

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Once upon a time, a small caterpillar popped out of its egg and found itself sitting on a leaf. It had striped fur and was called Stripe. As Stripe made his way slowly along the branch of the tree and down the trunk, he looked into the distance and saw an amazing sight—a huge pillar of caterpillars climbing on top of each other, trying to get to the top of the pillar.

It was a caterpillar pillar!

Stripe made his way over to the caterpillar pillar and started to climb up. Other caterpillars told him they didn't know what was at the top but they knew they had to get up there anyway.

As Stripe climbed, he found others pushing each other and treading each other down. Suddenly, as he was about to put a foot on to the head of another caterpillar, he looked into her lovely yellow eyes and thought, 'She looks nice. I can't tread on her.' They started talking and Stripe soon discovered that her name was Yellow.

As no one seemed to know what was at the top of the caterpillar pillar, Stripe and Yellow decided they would make their way down to the bottom again. At the bottom, Stripe and Yellow rested a while. Yellow was content to stay there but Stripe still wanted to know what was at the top of the pillar. He set off again, without Yellow, to have another go at reaching the top. Meanwhile, something very strange happened to Yellow: an unusual covering wrapped itself around her and she was gradually transformed into the most beautiful yellow butterfly. Up on the caterpillar pillar, Stripe climbed for ages. Other caterpillars were still treading each other down, trying to get to the top.

Suddenly, as Stripe was nearly at the top, he looked out and saw the most beautiful yellow butterfly flying towards him. He looked into her eyes and thought, 'I know those eyes. It can't be... It can't be... It's Yellow.' How beautiful she looked! Stripe then made his way down to the bottom of the pillar again and something strange started to happen to him too. An unusual covering started to surround him and he also was transformed into a beautiful butterfly.

That's my version of the story of Stripe and Yellow (Hope for the Flowers by Trina Paulus) and how they were transformed from their caterpillar bodies to their beautiful

² Taken from Full Worship Service by Andrew Pratt and Marjorie Dobson

butterfly bodies. It's a powerful story for Easter Day, speaking to us of transformation from one sort of body to another.

Easter Day is the celebration of the resurrection. The message of Christians is that Christ is risen. Today we hear in church services the great resurrection stories of the Gospels, stories of the empty tomb, the appearances of Jesus and the disciples' realisation that Jesus was alive again. It was a shocking and exciting experience for the disciples and they reacted to it in different ways. The women at the empty tomb in Mark's Gospel were too afraid to say anything. In Matthew's Gospel they went and told everyone. In the appearances on the road to Emmaus in Luke and at the tomb in John, Cleopas, the disciple with him, and Mary Magdalene didn't even recognise Jesus. The resurrection is a mysterious transforming event that shocks and excites.

The wonderful story of the transformation of Stripe and Yellow from caterpillars to butterflies parallels the Christian message of the resurrection.

It tells us that change can take place in our lives, that we can be transformed into something new and can mutate into something beautiful. The message of the resurrection of Jesus is that God gives new life, transforms us into something different and draws all creation up with him in the resurrection of Jesus. No wonder the butterfly became a symbol of Jesus' resurrection.³

Something to reflect on this week – where can you bring about new life? How can 'resurrection' be about more than just a story about a man called Jesus, and a part of how you live your life?

Hymn:

298 STF – Christ the Lord is risen today; Alleluia! OR

305 STF – Low in the grave he lay

Readings: Acts 10:34-43; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-18

Hymn:

306 STF – Now the green blade rises OR

296 STF – Christ has risen while earth slumbers

Reflections on the readings

Why are we here?

What is the meaning of life?

(I can almost hear the Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy fans muttering '42').

³ Taken from Easter Sunday: Transforming Lives by Stephen W Need

What happens when we die?

Is this all there is to existence?

Easter Sunday doesn't necessarily answer all the big questions, and the Easter story raises one or two of its own...

But it does add a huge portion of hope to the equation.

That's what this day is all about: because he lives, I can face tomorrow. On Easter Sunday, or Resurrection Sunday as it is in some traditions, we celebrate the remarkable crescendo of the gospel stories - where the crucified Jesus becomes the risen Jesus. Where death loses its sting. Where life, love and hope win against death, hate and despair.

This crucial moment in the Christian story, and in the story of humanity, doesn't immediately bring about the end of all that is evil, unjust or broken in our world. In fact, there appears to have been some confusion about this in the immediate aftermath of Jesus' resurrection and ascension: certainly Paul (the writer of large chunks of the New Testament) seems to think that Jesus is about to return in glory at any minute. He, and many in the early church, thought that Jesus' resurrection set into motion the end of the world, and that God would return in judgement and create a 'new heaven and a new earth' within a few decades, if not years.

However, 2000 years on from the resurrection stories, we have a slightly different perspective. Easter doesn't solve the world's problems. We only have to switch on the news or open our newspapers to discover that all is not well in the world.

But you don't need me to tell you that. You don't need me to tell you about injustice and heartbreak and bereavement and cancer and redundancy and family breakdown and pain. Because you know about those things already. All of our stories are tinged with sadness, we all carry some anxiety with us.

But that is why Easter matters.

Because, at Easter, we realise that "the worst thing is never the last thing" (to quote Pastor Adam Hamilton from the Church of the Resurrection in the USA).

At Easter, we learn that "it will be alright in the end, and if it's not alright, it's not the end" (to quote Mark Kermode, film reviewer and podcaster).

The big questions, the uncertainty and the pain don't disappear with the resurrection. But everything seems a little bit brighter...

With apologies to any Australian cricket fans, last summer produced one of the great miracles of recent sporting history when, somehow, an incredible innings from English all-rounder Ben Stokes enabled England to win a Test match they looked destined to lose.

England needed 359 runs to win, which would have been England's highest run chase ever in cricketing history, against a very strong Australian bowling line up. The stage was set for a hero, but the odds were stacked against them.

Then, in the midst of a difficult passage of play, the man who has been described as 'the best cricketer in a generation', Ben Stokes, strode out to bat.

At that point, all the questions, all the uncertainty, all the fear of defeat didn't disappear at once. Despite all his skill, Stokes couldn't make English fans fully confident that victory would be guaranteed. He might be brilliant, but he's not a superhero, or undefeatable.

The doubt continued for that evening and most of the next day, as wickets tumbled at the other end, as defeat looked inevitable, despite Stokes.

But then, the impossible happened. He and Jack Leach put on a remarkable 76 runs for the final wicket and England snatched victory from the jaws of defeat. Stokes, almost single-handedly, led England to victory in one of the most remarkable games of cricket we have witnessed in recent years.

I'm not sure how Stokes would feel about being compared to the Messiah...but that's not the point of this story. The comparison for us is to recognise where we are in the story. We are the equivalent of an England fan at some point during Stokes' innings on that famous last day.

We know we are facing a daunting and difficult task, we know we can't do it in our own strength, but we also have hope – because a very special person is here with us, seeming to be in control of the situation, making us believe that – despite the odds – a miracle might be possible.

That's what it means to be a resurrection people, to be an 'Easter people' – we have hope.

So when it comes to questions about the afterlife, we can't possibly know for certain what it will look like. But because of Jesus, because we believe in resurrection, we have hope.

When it comes to existential questions like 'why are we here?' or 'what is the meaning of life?', we don't know quite how to answer – but we have hope.

When we think about the future, when we face up to uncertainty and anxiety, when we watch the news or live with the pain of our families and friends, we can't bring immediate resolution. We can't fix everything overnight. But we have hope.

As Paul puts it in Colossians, we are 'made alive' in Christ. We live life to the full, and we live it with hope, because we are resurrection people.

So today, as you leave this place and head out into a world in pain, as you live with the uncertainty of life in 2020, go out with hope. Go out, as an Easter people.

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.

Hallelujah!⁴

⁴ Reflection written by Tim Baker

Hymn:

295 STF – Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord OR

307 STF – On the day of the resurrection

Prayers of intercession

During these prayers, I will invite you to join in with the response ‘He is risen indeed, Hallelujah’. So, when I say ‘Hallelujah, He is risen’, will you respond with, ‘He is risen indeed Hallelujah’.

Let us pray.

Hallelujah, He is risen,

All: He is risen indeed Hallelujah

God of peace and protection – in the light of your resurrection we pray for our world. The world is a place of darkness and hurt for so many, we pray specifically this morning for those whose lives have been displaced by war. God bring your peace to the divides created by our greed, pride and love for power. Wrap your protection and comfort around those fleeing from violence, may they find a place of welcome and support in the arms of your people.

Hallelujah, He is risen,

All: He is risen indeed Hallelujah

God of love and life – in the light of your resurrection we pray for our communities. You call us to do life with others, we pray specifically this morning for those in our communities who feel alone. For those we meet in our day to day lives who are feeling alone, isolated, lost and abandoned. We pray that you would draw close, that they would know your presence in a real and tangible way. Enable us to become a community that loves and welcomes everyone the way you love and welcome us.

Hallelujah, He is risen,

All: He is risen indeed Hallelujah

God of forgiveness and mercy – in the light of your resurrection we pray for ourselves. Through your love you offer us an eternity spent with you as co-heirs to the kingdom of Heaven, this day as we celebrate you triumphing over death we know that there have been times when we have not lived the way you would want us to, where our words, thoughts and actions have not glorified you, and we are sorry. So today, we ask for your forgiveness and we thank you for your mercy.

Hallelujah, He is risen,

All: He is risen indeed Hallelujah

Amen.⁵

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Lauren Brabbs

We will now take up the offering.

Blessing the offering

We celebrate the miracle of resurrection, and we recognise the need for new life in the world around us. We are your people Lord, the people of new life – help us to use our gifts to inspire new life, to enable resurrection, by the Spirit of the living God.

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

311 STF – The day of resurrection, earth, tell it out abroad! OR

313 STF – Thine be the glory

Blessing

Go out into a world in need, and bring new life.

Go out into a world of conflict and division, and bring peace.

Go out into a world of hatred and greed, and bring love.

Go out in Jesus' name and in the power of the Spirit, a resurrection people.

Amen.⁷

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker