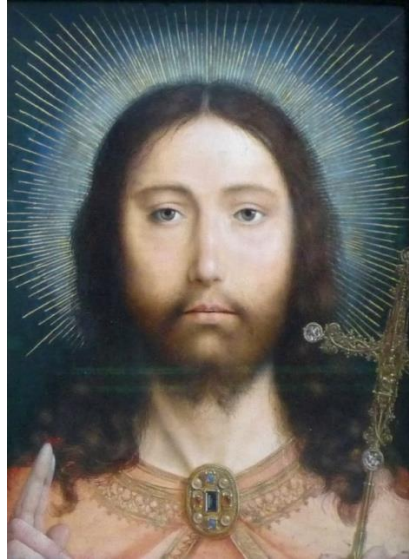


Whitehorse Uniting Church
Written Worship
Sunday 7 April 2023
Easter Sunday



Welcome

Happy Easter. May the worship bless you.

YouTube Hymn: Christ the Lord has Risen today.

Charles Wesley 1707-88 *alt.*
Hymns Triumphant Performers 2018
Md1801
<https://youtu.be/9khJXoL9QGk>

Call to Worship

Jesus Christ is Risen!
He is Risen indeed!
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Easter Prayer

Alleluia to you our loving God.
Praise and thanksgiving to you for the gift of life
For the gift of the risen Christ in our lives
For the gift of your Holy Spirit that you pour into our hearts so we may know love,
joy and peace and bear fruit for your kingdom
Your Spirit fills us with hope for the future.
Let the Church proclaim: He is Risen!
Blessed are you, Lord God our Father,
by your power our Lord Jesus Christ has risen from the dead.

Lord, we rejoice and celebrate that you who was dead is alive.
You who was buried is risen.

Alleluia to you our Lord Jesus Chris, conqueror of death and hell.
Alleluia to you Christ the gateway to life everlasting.
Because of you, death is conquered, and we are free.
For you, Christ, have won the victory.

Holy Spirit, we give you our thanks and praise.
Come upon us today so we may understand the gospel,
and claim it as our good news.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
We praise you for this glorious day.

Lord our God, you help us see your majesty in all of life.
Its sunsets and sunrises, its light and darkness,
its tombs and gardens and in the faces of our loved ones
and the beauty of our homes.

Loving God, open our graces and give us life.
So, all that has been buried may be freed and forgiven.
Set our hearts free as we come to you in this moment of silence.
With all our concerns and need for forgiveness

Silence

Hear then Christ's words of grace to us.

"Your sins are forgiven".

Thanks be to God.

YouTube Hymn: Come let us with our Lord Arise

Charles Wesley 1707-88 *alt.*

Drolas 94. 2013

<https://youtu.be/0rv05ZAmI-k>

John 20:1-18

20 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. ² 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."

³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus's head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed, ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look^[a] into the tomb, ¹² 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. ¹³ 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.”

¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?”

Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir,^[b] if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹

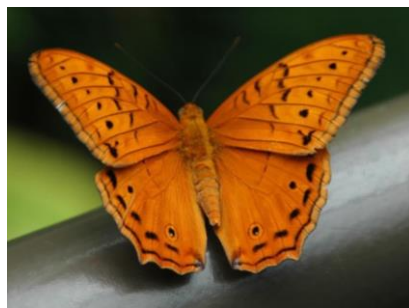
⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew,^[c] “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher).

¹⁷ Jesus said to her, “Do not touch 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.’”

¹⁸ 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.

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Young at Heart



Butterflies symbolise new life. The journey from a caterpillar into a cocoon and then emerging from the darkness into the light. Ponder on how butterflies symbolise the journey to faith and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Thine be the Glory - Handel

Kings College Choir 2012

Donhenri01

<https://youtu.be/IXzmjNE-yLA>

Easter Sermon

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen.



Image RCL

Let us begin by examining the resurrection story.

Mary goes to the tomb early in the morning and sees the stone door rolled away and immediately concludes, someone has stolen Jesus' body. She runs to tell Peter and the disciple who Jesus loved, and they run to the tomb. It is Peter who enters first. We don't know what he thinks and feels. He sees the linen wrappings lying there and the cloth from Jesus' head rolled up in a place by itself. The disciple who Jesus loved enters the tomb and he sees what Peter sees and believes. Both do not understand how Jesus has risen. They go home. Perhaps they see an empty tomb or does the disciple who Jesus loved sense his presence, not absence? Mary returns to the tomb. She does not enter it. She looks inside and sees two angels. They ask her why she is weeping. She says because "they" have stolen Jesus' body. She is focused on his dead body. All of them, Peter, the disciple who Jesus loved and Mary, are focused on the empty tomb.

Mary turns around and doesn't recognise Jesus. He must look different, or her grief blinds her. They are in a garden outside the tomb. Jesus asks her the same question the angels asked: Woman, why are you weeping? She accuses him of stealing his own body.

This is when things change, dramatically.

Jesus says: *Mary*. She calls out: *Rabbouni!* It means teacher or great one, a term of endearment. She must have embraced him, for he asks her not to hold onto him for he is not yet ascended to the Father. Their relationship cannot be like the old relationship. Time is short and he is not as he was, for he is to ascend to heaven. By now Mary must have forgotten her grief. Perhaps she's feeling awe or joy or excitement or all of these feelings.

He was risen, alive, real, and she had held him. She was standing before the risen Jesus as the first witness to his resurrection. He commissions her to take a message to the other disciples. It is an "I am" statement about his identity and divinity. I am ascending to my Father, and to your Father and to my God and to your God.

Mary returns to the disciples and announces: "*I have seen the Lord*" and she delivers Jesus' message to them.

There is a lot for us to ponder about in today's gospel.

There are three kinds of faith.

The faith of the disciple Jesus loved who did not see Jesus in the empty tomb but saw the linen wrappings and believed. He knew in his heart Jesus had risen but he did not see Jesus, nor did he understand scripture about Jesus being resurrected. Perhaps he sensed his presence, not absence. Many people do not see Jesus, nor do they fully understand, but they know in their heart and sense his presence and believe. Perhaps the Holy Spirit, helps them know and believe. We all know people who have an unshakable faith and no matter what, believe, and know Jesus is risen and with us.

We have the faith of Peter. He entered the tomb and we do not know what he felt or thought. But we do know that he met the risen Jesus several times and ate breakfast with him and was convinced over time he had risen. He needed time to check out things and be convinced.



Image RCL

We have the faith of Mary. Blind in her grief she did not go into the tomb. She looked inside and saw angels in the tomb but continued to grieve. She saw Jesus, and in her grief did not recognise him. Many people know grief. Grief because of wounds, of loss or mistreatment or exclusion or rejection or loneliness or addictions or health issues. Perhaps some people may focus on their wounds for a time and these wounds take all their time and energy and they may not be open to seeing God's glory all around them. Such is the depth of their suffering and pain. Perhaps Mary felt like this, after Jesus had died such a horrible death. All was lost. But when she hears her name, his voice, she forgets her grief. She becomes the first witness to his resurrection, and it transforms her from a frightened grieving woman to a leader in the early church. It is the beginning of her resurrection faith. Mary who was well known in the Eastern church, and this is an icon of her holding an egg, symbolising new life from the tomb. Perhaps she went to Turkey or Greece. It seems she was not well known in the Western church who mistook her for other Mary's like Mary of Bethany or the woman who had demons cast out of her. The west portrayed her as a sinner. The East portrayed her as a saint and leader of the early church, a wealthy businesswoman. I have seen her gospel in a library at CTM with what she has written whited out. Perhaps there is a complete gospel somewhere in an Eastern Orthodox church.

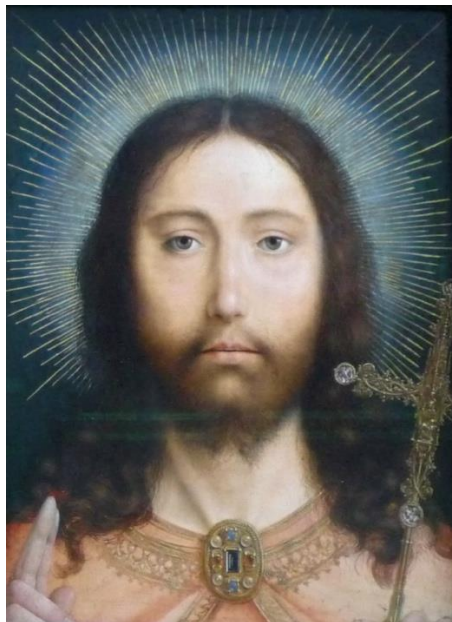


Image RCL

Where are you with your faith and belief in Jesus? Are you like Peter, or the disciple who Jesus loved or are you like Mary, or a little like all of them?

Today's gospel has left me wondering about why Peter and the disciple who Jesus loved went into the tomb and Mary didn't enter it. Why didn't Peter and the disciple see Jesus? Why Mary?

The resurrection story doesn't begin in the tomb. The tomb has a role to remind us it is the place of death that all of us must leave behind. Perhaps the cloths symbolise old ways that need to be let go of so we can

see and know new life, like the disciple whom Jesus loved, and Peter discovered. They came to know new life is possible and believed Jesus had risen. They left behind the memory of the discarded linen cloths so they could come to know the risen Jesus.

The resurrection doesn't begin in the tomb. It begins in the garden near the tomb. Here humanity is welcomed back from exile from the garden of Eden. In Mary humanity has returned to paradise. Jesus has defeated the darkness and evil that began in the garden of Eden with Eve. This is a new beginning for all. Mary had to be the first witness to heal the rift created by Eve. Now all humanity is restored to the garden of life because of Jesus.

There are gardens we have been excluded from in life because of circumstances beyond our control. Gardens of deep gladness or peace or closeness. Then Jesus calls our name in our heart, and we hear him and leave behind what has excluded us from wholeness and happiness, and we are restored and healed. Jesus constantly reminds us not to hold onto old ways that keep us far from life. Old ways that keep us out of the garden of paradise. Old ways that prevent us from following him as the risen Christ.

Jesus is risen. We need to rise too.

The Lord be with you.

I know that my Redeemer Liveth – Handel's Messiah

SylviaMcNainVEVO 2010

<https://youtu.be/Kg7aXEvCeXY>

Prayers of the People - Rhonda Goodall

We commence our prayers today with an excerpt from Bruce Prewer's Australian prayers.
"God of the risen Christ and our God. We rejoice in your resurrection power, which is fully ours in Jesus Christ, and we pray that you will keep us alert to the sufferings, needs and or duties that burden many people this Easter."

In our prayers today we pray for the people, whether they be migrants, refugees, the dispossessed and or displaced; and or the poor of Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, all less affluent than their neighbouring countries of the European Union. Lord, encourage their leaders to make decisions which will make a positive difference to their people's lives and wellbeing.

In our ecumenical prayers we pray for St Timothy's Catholic Church, Forest Hill, under the guidance of Father Gerard Johnson. Bless their continuing ministry within the parish assisting those in need of care and support.

We pray for the Uniting Church at Glen Iris Road, led by Reverend Gareth Darlow. Be with their leaders as they continue a vision of ministry to build an active welcoming and creative Uniting Church presence in their region now and into the future. We also remember in our prayers the Manningtree AgeWell community in Hawthorn, offering care for retirees and the assisted elderly residing at Manningtree.

We extend our prayers for our congregation. Be with our ministers as they bring us the word of God and provide pastoral support for those in need, whether they be ill, infirmed, down in spirit, lonely and or incapacitated. May they feel your presence Lord, in your healing powers of comfort, solace and peace.

Lord guide us in the coming week, may we feel your constant love and presence and quote again.
"May we all know your love in the message of Easter and to rejoice in the gift of life in Christ".
God of Easter, keep each of us aware of others' needs around us and our own needs also.

May we continue our growth in: Faith, Hope and Love, which are with us on this day of resurrection through Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us to pray:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. 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 for ever, Amen.

This Joyful Eastertide

Words George Ratcliffe Woodward. Tune from Netherlands. Charles Wood Harmonisation
The Gesauldo Six 2021

<https://youtu.be/QxGwrNGyyWg>

Easter Blessing

May the Lord be our strength and might.

May we see Jesus in one another and know him in our hearts.

May we be touched by the Lord's presence and surprised by joy.

May we be blessed by belief in the resurrection of our Lord and may the Holy Spirit give us courage and faith for the journey, amen.

YouTube Hymn: Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks to the Risen Lord

Donald E. Fishel

Sound of Worship 2020

<https://youtu.be/I53k-dIUPx4>



Rev Tina on Leave for one week

Rev Tina is away next week taking a rest with her family.

Rev Julie Ross is taking next Sunday's Service at Forest Hill

Please contact your pastoral partner or visitor if you have a pastoral care concern.

If the matter is urgent contact the convenor of our pastoral care ministry group

Julie Hawkey,

or your pastoral contact persons

Barb Wandock

Glenys Coates and Judy Marsh

Colleen Rowe and Robyn Cox