

## WORSHIP FOR EASTER DAY 2020

*Today we enter into a different experience from our usual Easter Day worship celebrations – no sunrise service, no Easter egg hunts, no endless alleluias sung in unison. But instead of mourning the loss of our Easter celebrations let us attempt to enter more fully into the experience of the disciples as one by one in the pain of loss they found their darkness lifted and their faith renewed.*

### GREETING

Alleluia! Christ is risen!  
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Jesus, stand among us in thy risen power  
let this time of worship be a hallowed hour.

### HYMN **See, what a morning (Singing the faith 309)**

Sing / read / pray / proclaim the words

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18\\_PDY22Sck](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18_PDY22Sck)

See, what a morning, gloriously bright,  
with the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;  
folded the graveclothes, tomb filled with light,

as the angels announce Christ is risen!  
See God's salvation plan,  
wrought in love, born in pain, paid in sacrifice,  
fulfilled in Christ, the Man,  
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

See Mary weeping, "Where is he laid?"  
as in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb;  
hears a voice speaking, calling her name;  
it's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!  
The voice that spans the years,  
speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to us,  
will sound till he appears,  
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

One with the Father, Ancient of Days,  
through the Spirit who clothes faith with certainty;  
honour and blessing, glory and praise  
to the King crowned with power and authority!  
And we are raised with him,  
death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered;  
and we shall reign with him,  
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

*Stuart Townend (b.1963) and Keith Getty (b.1974)*

**PRAYER** (*Methodist Worship Book page 160*)

Let us pray.

Glory to you, O God: you raised Jesus from the grave,  
bringing us victory over death and giving us eternal life.

Glory to you, O Christ: for us and our salvation you overcame  
death and opened the gate to everlasting life.

Glory to you, O Holy Spirit: you lead us into the truth  
and breathe new life into us.

Glory to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
now and for ever. Amen

Lord, if we have fallen into despair,  
if we have failed to hope in you,  
if we have been fearful of death,  
and forgotten the victory of Christ,  
Forgive us.

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

Amen.

*All four gospels give us slightly different accounts of the resurrection  
– here is how Matthew records it in **Matthew 28: 1-10***

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning,  
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.  
And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the  
Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone  
and sat on it. His appearance was like lightening, and his  
clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and  
became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Do  
not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was  
crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said.  
Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his  
disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is  
going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him’ This is my  
message for you.”

So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran  
to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said,  
“Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and  
worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid;  
go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see  
me.”

**Reflection**

Many years ago, I was coming back from a pastoral visit in the  
early hours of Easter Day and I saw the sun rise. It was  
glorious, but it didn't last long and by the time we were singing

our alleluias in church the sky was overcast. But I could say with fervour – the sun rose today and I witnessed it. And, of course, though not everyone had witnessed it, no one doubted because light had returned to the earth, flowers grew, people recognised and greeted each other. We experienced it only because it had been dark and now the light had come.

And of course, the sun did not rise – it was the earth that moved and turned its face to the sun, as we now do, consciously turning towards the light of the world. Our understanding of God’s eternal purposes is that the resurrection was not a glorious afterthought where God’s power turned around the intentions of sinful men and women who crucified Jesus; it was God himself who so loved the world that he gave his only Son. The resurrection is not a happy end to a sad story, a restoration, a reversal that proves God’s almighty power. It is the self-offering that proves God’s almighty love. And the gospels are written so that those who did not see Jesus rise from death may still believe that God’s power to bring light out of darkness and life out of death is real and can be our experience.

The amazing thing in all this is that God permitted the Cross, not that God enabled the resurrection. This is who God is –

eternal life, eternal love, eternally reaching out towards his creation, even to the point of dying to save us.

When you think about it, as profound as it is, the resurrection was a fairly low-key affair. (Matthew is the only writer to mention an earthquake!) The news gets out as one disciple sees and believes and tells another – in the graveyard, in the upper room, on the road to Emmaus, over an impromptu breakfast by the lakeside. Someone described this experience as, ‘there will be no beating of drums, nor anyone knowing he is come, but darkness will vanish and light flood the room’.

And this year this is how we hear it again, one by one – sitting on our own or with immediate family, reading about it, listening to it on the internet or tuning in to the radio or television. Today the passing of the peace could be dangerous, any approach to another must be through masks and gowns and facial protection and our best friend is a hand sanitiser. But we are powerfully reminded that today is Easter Sunday and we celebrate the victory of Christ over death and destruction.

And we need to hear it and to share it and to tell others, because today we fear the insidious pestilence that comes as a threat to our community life and for so many people means

the end of their earthly life, leaving families and communities to mourn in isolation, to fear each other and to fear the future.

But as powerful as that fear is, we also recognise the need to rejoice in the self-giving of many people in the service of others, the outpouring of concern that infiltrates our local communities and in which we are right to celebrate our humanity.

This time will pass and maybe out of it will come new ways of living in the light of what we have experienced.

In the meantime, we turn our faces to the rising of the Son of God.

I was taken with words of John Muir written as he contemplated one of the paintings depicting resurrection in the Methodist Art Collection. He wrote:

Everybody needs beauty as well as bread,  
Places to play and pray in,  
Where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul alike.

This grand show is eternal.  
It is always sunrise somewhere;  
The dew is never dried all at once;

A shower is forever falling;  
vapour is ever rising;  
eternal sunrise, eternal sunset, eternal dawn and gloaming;  
on sea and continents and islands,  
each in its turn as the round earth rolls.

### **Happy Easter – Christ is risen.**

#### **PRAYER**

Eternal God, we turn to the mystery of the empty tomb so that we may see and believe, and live our lives in the confidence of renewed faith.

Lord, in your rising comes hope – your power is not limited by our little faith, by our failures to understand or our unwillingness to believe.

In your rising comes renewal – you entrust and empower us to be your agents of love.

We pray for all whose lives have been deeply affected in these days of testing:  
for those who are infected by the virus and all who are anxious about it;

for those who suffer loss through the death of family members or friends, and for whom grief has been made more intense through lack of funeral provision;  
for those for whom isolation brings intolerable loneliness;  
for those whose family relationships have been severely tested and who have suffered abuse;  
for the economic hardships it has brought for many.

We pray

for all health workers and volunteers;  
for care givers and good neighbours;  
for scientists and engineers;  
for politicians and broadcasters.

We pray for your church, finding new ways to minister and to serve.

We commit ourselves again to be witnesses to your glory and power by the quality of our own lives.

#### **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.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen

#### **HYMN      God who knows our darkest moments**

*(This hymn is not in our hymnbook, but is written by Methodist minister Revd Gareth Hill. It was written to be used at the anniversary of the Aberfan pit disaster in which 116 children and 28 adults died. It can be sung to the Welsh tune Dim ond Jesu – Singing the Faith 713)*

God who knows our darkest moments  
meets us in our brokenness,  
walks beside us as a whisper,  
holds our pain in his caress.

God, who leads through shadowed valleys,  
where death's bleakness dims our sight,  
speaks a peace beyond our knowledge,  
floods our anguish with his light.

Far beyond our grief's horizon  
as creation holds its breath,  
Love Divine, revealed in Jesus,  
tears apart the chains of death.  
Servant, son and humble healer  
by your cross and life laid down  
you have carried all our suffering,  
and you wear the victor's crown.

Lift us up, now, risen Saviour,  
to the place where mercy plays,  
where our broken hopes and heartaches  
find a healing in your gaze.  
This is love, that God has saved us!  
This is love, that Christ has died!  
We rejoice that love has conquered  
and has drawn us to your side.

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### **Blessing**

God the Father,  
by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead,  
strengthen us to walk with him in his risen life;  
and may almighty God bless us,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.