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Service for Easter Sunday, 4th April 2021

A warm welcome to all who share in worship with us today.

Our service is led by Revd Diana Cullum-Hall, a former Minister of this church.

INTROIT: “Since by man came death” from *Messiah* by Handel
sung by the church choir, an archive recording from 1999.

*Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.
For as in Adam all die; even so, in Christ, shall all be made alive!*

CALL TO WORSHIP

The Lord is risen! **He is risen indeed!**
Welcome to worship this Easter Sunday morning!

This is the Good News: the grave is empty and Christ is risen. **Alleluia!**
This is the Good News: the light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never put it out. **Alleluia!**
This is the Good News: once we were no people, now we are God’s people. **Alleluia!**
Christ is our peace, the indestructible peace we have with each other.

PRAYERS

Let us pray

Gracious and Eternal God, our hearts lift with the moment of this morning.
Now we see more clearly the way, now we know more nearly the truth,
now we find more dearly the life.
This is the day of rising.
This is the day of unutterable joy.
This is the day of death’s defeat.
This is the day you have made new all our dearest desires,
all our hopes and schemes and dreams,
all our chances to choose to live for the sake of our risen Lord, Jesus Christ.
This is the day and this is the time: today, now, we are together in worship,
in the name of the same Lord, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Donald Hilton

THE LORD’S PRAYER

**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: Christ the Lord is risen (*only verse 1 is present on the audio/video*)

1 Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia! Let creation join to say, Alleluia! Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia! Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!	3 Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia! Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia! Once he died our souls to save, Alleluia! Where's thy victory, boasting grave? Alleluia!
2 Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia! Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia! Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia! Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!	4 Hail the Lord of earth and heaven, Alleluia! Praise to thee by both be given, Alleluia! Thee we greet triumphant now, Alleluia! Hail the Resurrection, thou, Alleluia!

Charles Wesley

If you would like to *sing* this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.

SCRIPTURE READING: St John 20: 1-18

20 Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the entrance. ² She went running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

³ Then Peter and the other disciple went to the tomb. ⁴ The two of them were running, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and saw the linen wrappings, but he did not go in. ⁶ Behind him came Simon Peter, and he went straight into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there ⁷ and the cloth which had been around Jesus' head. It was not lying with the linen wrappings but was rolled up by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in; he saw and believed. (⁹ They still did not understand the scripture which said that he must rise from death.) ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back home.

¹¹ Mary stood crying outside the tomb. While she was still crying, she bent over and looked in the tomb ¹² and saw angels there dressed in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³ "Woman, why are you crying?" they asked her. She answered, "They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him!"

¹⁴ Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not know it was Jesus. ¹⁵ "Woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who is it that you are looking for?" She thought he was the gardener, so she said to him, "If you took him away, sir, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned towards him and said in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (This means "Teacher.")

¹⁷ "Do not hold on to me," Jesus told her, "because I have not yet gone back up to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to him who is my Father and their Father, my God and their God."

¹⁸ So Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and related to them what he had told her.

Thanks be to God

ADDRESS

The stone had been rolled away!

There are few times in life when everyone experiences something as life-changing as the pandemic has been. Each one of us has been touched by the anxiety the virus brings. Each of us has known the strange lockdown world, when it became against the law to invite a friend in for a cup of tea. There can be few people who haven't known someone who has been grieving or have watched the daily statistics of illness and death with such sadness and distress.

Consequently, each one of us can understand a little of how Mary Magdalene felt on that Easter morning. We have a collective grief that has touched us all. As we have experienced lockdown, it has almost seemed as if we have been shut behind a stone and now – tentatively – the stone is being rolled away. Many Christians are going to church this Sunday for the first time in months – and through tears & fears are knowing the joy of being together again and worshipping together.

There is new life, new hope, new beginnings. Slowly the stone of lockdown is rolling away.

But there is such a difference between the joy and hope we feel as lockdown eases, and the unutterable joy which Mary experienced as she recognised Jesus through tear-filled eyes. Here was resurrection hope, death defeated, fear and grief and tears wiped away. Here was Jesus, her Love, her Saviour, her Lord, her Easter Joy. She didn't understand the how, she didn't understand the why. She just knew that her Love, her Saviour had returned – and nothing could ever take him away from her. The stone, indeed, had been rolled away.

Today, we too join with Mary in celebrating Easter joy. There is resurrection hope, death has been defeated, fear and grief and tears have been wiped away. Our Love, our Saviour, our Lord, our Jesus has returned and nothing can ever take him away from us.

The stone has been rolled away!

PRAYERS of intercession

Let us pray

Risen Lord, Holy Jesus, on this day – this Easter Day – we bring before you in prayer people who are grieving, people who lack your love and joy, people who are frightened of what the future holds, who are in despair because of all that has happened in the last year. May they know the hope and love and joy which comes from knowing you.

We give you thanks on this joyful day for people who have been able to meet up with loved ones after so long; who are excited about what the future holds, who have been able to come to church even though they still feel anxious. We give thanks for people who have given so much in the last year in faithful service and generous love.

We bring before you in prayer people who are still feeling lonely and vulnerable, who are struggling with the long term effects of illness, who are worried about the financial impact on their families. We pray for people across the nations who are struggling with disasters, poverty and unimaginable violence. May we, in some way, be instruments of your peace.

We pray for members of our congregation who are able to be here today and for those who are at home, and we give thanks for our loved ones who are now safe in your love.

On this day – this Easter Day – may we and Christians everywhere be your Easter people, renewed in our faith as we share the good news of your love with confidence and joy. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

HYMN: Let us break bread together

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| 1. Let us break bread together in the Lord;
Let us break bread together in the Lord:
<i>When I fall on my knees, with my face to
the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.</i> | 2. Let us drink wine together in the Lord;
Let us drink wine together in the Lord:

3. Let us praise God together in the Lord;
Let us praise God together in the Lord: |
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Based on an Afro-American spiritual

If you would like to *sing* this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.

HOLY COMMUNION

The table of the Lord is your place of gathering.

Here you are welcomed, wanted and loved. Here there is a place set for you.

So come all you who thirst, all who hunger for the bread of life, all whose souls cry out for healing.

Come all you who are weary, all who are bowed down with worry, all who ache with the tiredness of living.

Come all you poor, all who are without food or refuge, all who go hungry in a fat land.

Come all who are lost, all who search for meaning and cannot find it, all who have no place of belonging. Jesus invites you.

Draw near with faith to receive these symbols of the body and blood of Jesus.

We eat and drink in remembrance that Christ died for us.

Listen to the words of institution....

Jesus, on the night of his arrest, betrayal and torture took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying: "Take, eat, this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, he also took the cup after supper, saying: "This is my blood of the New Covenant poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. As often as you drink it, do it in remembrance of me."

As Jesus prayed before the meal, *let us pray*.

Creator God, we thank you that you are a gracious and generous host, and yet you became the guest of humanity, the guest of the villagers of Nazareth, the religious leaders in the synagogue, the prostitutes, drunkards and tax collectors.

You let us play host, you dined at our table, you ate our bread and drank our wine, and when you left the table, you left us bread and wine for us to remember you.

Your death on the cross has enabled us to be guests at the Father's table.

Grant that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, these gifts of bread and wine may be for us symbols of the body and blood of our Lord, and that we may be nourished with thanksgiving. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

Christ, let us see, by this most holy sign, love's highest cost revealed in bread and wine. As you command, this also we will do, living and giving all to honour you.

Jesus took bread and broke it and he said to his friends, "This is my body, broken for you. Do this to remember me."

The bread of heaven; eat and be nourished.....

The cup of blessing; drink and remember.....

Fed — no longer hungry; satisfied — no longer thirsty; equal — no longer strangers; friends — traveling companions; God's children — Jesus' disciples.

With food for the journey, hope for the dawn, with peace with our neighbour, love for the world, we go on our way knowing we are blessed.

As you have received the gift of God's hospitality and love this Eastertide, go and share God's hospitality and love with others. In the name of Jesus Christ, **Amen.**

HYMN: Thine be the glory

1 Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
Endless is the vict'ry thou o'er death has 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 vict'ry thou o'er death has 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 has 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:
*Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
Endless is the vict'ry thou o'er death has won!*

Edmond Budry

If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.

BLESSING

A very happy Easter to you all: God bless you.