

Easter 2 19 April 2020

EASTER GREETING

Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

CALL TO WORSHIP

When doors were shut and the world was kept out,
When the church gathers and the world waits outside,

**resurrection found the disciples.
resurrection finds us.**

When fear grew and new questions were found,
When faith leads us into new questions about life,

**resurrection found the disciples.
resurrection finds us.**

When suffering remained and the city was hostile,
When Christ gathers with his followers in living worship

**resurrection found the disciples.
resurrection finds us.**

SONG: 390 Alleluia, Alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord (vs 2,4,5)

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

2. Spread the good news o'er all the earth: Jesus has died and has risen. *Alleluia, alleluia...*
4. God has proclaimed his gracious gift: New life for all! Alleluia! *Alleluia, alleluia...*
5. Come, let us praise the living God, joyfully sing to our Saviour. *Alleluia, alleluia...*

PRAYER

We worship you, O God, with praise and thanksgiving for that gift of life made possible through Jesus' costly death and victorious resurrection.

We thank you God for the sense of fellowship and joy we experience as part of the Body of Christ even in our separation.

We thank you for the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Yet, we confess that there are times when we feel afraid, abandoned, and lonely;
when our lives seem bereft your presence;

(silent reflection)

Come to us, risen Christ.

Come through the closed doors of our hearts and minds and take away our fears and doubts.

Come to us, risen Christ. Breathe on us and fill us with the joy and peace of your presence.

Bless us all as people who have not seen you but who want to believe that you are truly the risen Christ, Son of God.

Strengthen and confirm our belief in Jesus in this time of worship today.

May we know the blessings of his peace within us and the breath of his Spirit upon us.

We offer this prayer and our worship in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen

READINGS

Your word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet: **A light to our path**

John 20:19-23 (24-31)

Lord may your word live in us:

And bear much fruit to your glory.

MESSAGE: BEHIND LOCKED DOORS

Our story begins with a group of people gathered behind locked doors. They are there behind locked doors to get away from those through whom death might come. Not those who might happen to have the Corona Virus but rather those who might do to them what they did to Jesus. It is a time of fear and uncertainty as to what the future might hold.

“The doors were locked for fear of the Jews” John 20:19
Why were they afraid of the Jews? They themselves were Jews. What is meant here is that they were afraid of those who would use religion against them. Afraid that what happened to Jesus might happen to them – arrest, torture, imprisonment, even death.

Behind closed doors is this motley group of disciples - scared, disheartened, confused and defensive. But somehow the risen Christ pushed through the locked door and stood among them. Surprising them with his presence.

The risen Christ continues to surprise us with his presence pushing through the locked doors of fear in our life. Fear of the other, fear of loneliness, fear that we won't have enough, fear of sickness, fear of death. Into the midst of our fear and uncertainties, disappointments and confusion Jesus comes with his gift of peace

The risen Christ came to his disciples in the midst of their turmoil and fear, in the midst of their doubt and their sense of having failed both him and their own selves and said to them “Peace be with you” And when he said this he showed them his wounds – the holes in his hands and in his side – as if to say:

“See these wounds – feel them and know that it is all right to hurt.
Pain comes to us all – I was hurt as all people are hurt
- But that pain and that hurt no longer has power or control over me
- I live as I said I would”

The gift of peace that Jesus brings is not an absence of grief or trouble or threat but
Peace in the midst of turmoil
Peace in the midst of fear
Peace in the midst of doubt
Peace in the midst of grief
Peace that is ours as we experience the risen Christ standing beside us.

Jesus the risen Christ still enters through locked doors surprising us with his presence, bringing his gift of peace and worship takes place. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord and they are sent out to continue God's work in the world. To do the work that Jesus was called to do, bringing God's love and forgiveness and healing grace into the lives of the people around us. Shining the light in the dark, bringing bread to the hungry, and community to the despised and rejected.

Jesus breathed on them saying “Receive the Holy Spirit”
In this encounter with the risen Christ the disciples are changed and transformed, empowered to go beyond the locked doors of their fears to do God's saving, renewing work in the world.

It is interesting to note that this gift of the spirit – the very life giving breath of God takes place fifty days before Pentecost.

Fifty days before they spilled out onto the streets, in such a way that others wondered what was going on, and heard the story of Jesus in their own languages such that many believed and they too became part of this new community centred on the person and life of Christ.

Fifty days of prayer and worship, sharing the story and supporting one another.

Those early disciples were free to gather with others in their homes.

We are limited to gatherings of two but still we share and support one another and worship, by phone, on line, and through letter box drops.

Early followers of Jesus did venture out from their homes, to fish, to do essential work, to get food and as they did so they encountered the living Christ in a variety of ways.

How will we use this time behind locked doors, confined to our homes?

Will we come away changed?

When the time comes and we are able to go about again what is the work of Christ that we will take up?

We are church not because of the building we've built and cared for, not because of all the activities we do, or the preaching and singing. We are church because to us Jesus, the risen Christ, has come and given us his gifts of Spirit, mission and forgiveness, commissioning us to give them to the whole world in his name.

For the moment we are limited in being able to get out and about,

We can't gather as we would like to but in this time of waiting whether it is fifty days or longer may you encounter the risen Christ, know the peace of his presence, and breathe deeply of the gift of the Spirit -supporting and encouraging one another in whatever ways you can.

The time will come when once again we will be sent out by the power of the spirit pouring into the streets, gathering with others in the Op Shop, and at "cuppa and chat" and with those at Latrobe and GoTafe, with families and friends, and those we play sport and share hobbies with. There will be opportunities wherever we go, with whoever we meet, to share the Good news of new life in Christ and the peace that is his gift to us.

When the time comes the question will be, do we go out to simply pick up the pieces of life that we have put on hold for a while, or do we go out as changed people, to see life and ministry in new ways because we have encountered the risen Christ behind the locked doors of our home, and we have been renewed by his life giving spirit, and heard afresh his call upon our life.

SONG: TIS 387 Christ is alive! Let Christians sing

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing. The cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises ring; Love, drowned in death, shall never die.

Christ is alive! No longer bound to distant years in Palestine,
But saving, healing, here and now, and touching every place and time.

In every insult, rift and war, where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more, and lives, where even hope has died.

Women and men, in age and youth can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
And find the way, the life, the truth, revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

Christ is alive, and comes to bring good news to this and every age,
Till earth and sky and ocean ring with joy, with justice, love, and praise.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Jesus, wounded and risen, we bring to you our prayers for your broken world.
We pray for people in all countries struggling to deal with the Corona virus.
for those who are also dealing with civil unrest and oppression.
For those devastated by storms and cyclones and bush fires.

Wounded Creator,
we have seen your crucified and risen love;
work your resurrection in the lives of your people.

We bring our prayers for your church.
We pray for where it is split by faction
And where hurts have not yet been healed by your gospel
For where unforgiveness and bitterness remain.

Wounded Redeemer,
we have seen your crucified and risen love;
work your resurrection in the lives of your people.

We bring our prayers for our fractured community.
We pray for those pierced by nails of prejudice and hatred;
Of neglect and abuse;
Of indifference and rejection.

Wounded Lover,
we have seen your crucified and risen love;
work your resurrection in the lives of your people.

We bring our prayers for all who are hurt.
We pray for those whose bodies are in pain or whose minds are confused;
Those who are friendless or grief stricken;
Those without hope for the future/

Wounded Healer,
we have seen your crucified and risen love;
work your resurrection in the lives of your people. Amen

(Adapted from "Let us Pray")

BENEDICTION

May you find Jesus standing beside you.
May he be close enough to touch.
May he breathe on all your living, and speak peace into your lives. Amen