

# worship notes



from the United Reformed Church

Sunday 31 March 2024  
Easter Sunday  
The Revd Matt Stone

## Call to Worship

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

On this glorious Easter morning, united with God's people everywhere, we join together in our first hymn to declare and celebrate the world-changing resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

## Prayers of Approach and Confession

Loving God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
We praise you this morning for all that you are, and all that you have done.  
We thank you for coming to us in Jesus Christ,  
and for Jesus's willingness to journey to the Cross for us.  
We cannot fully comprehend your suffering or sacrifice,  
but we give thanks for amazing grace, and we celebrate his glorious resurrection.  
Through Jesus, we can be in no doubt of your love for us.  
Through Jesus, we receive your forgiveness and mercy.  
Through Jesus, there is victory over sin and death.  
Through Jesus, we are adopted into your family.  
Through Jesus, we can be filled with your transforming Spirit.  
Through Jesus, there is hope.

Forgive us, Lord, when we forget all that you have done,  
or fail to live differently in light of your good news.  
Breathe your living Spirit into our hearts today, that we might not only hear,  
but respond to your life-changing hope.  
In Jesus' name, Amen.

We share in the words of The Lord's Prayer. Our Father...

## Reading

*St John 20:1-18*

## All-age Activity

There are a range of excellent videos about Easter on the website [gochattervideos.com/easter/](http://gochattervideos.com/easter/). Some are available free, others have a small cost attached. You might like to choose a video that retells the whole Easter story, such as 'The Lego Easter Story' (<https://gochattervideos.com/downloads/the-lego-easter-story-northern-english-accent/>). After the video, you could have a quiz with some simple questions about what happened, but also some deeper questions about what Easter means. For example: Why did Jesus die? What does Jesus' death mean for us? What difference does Jesus' resurrection make to us – and to the world?

## Sermon Preparation Notes

There are lots of different ways of preaching on the resurrection and Jesus's appearance to Mary Magdalene on Easter Sunday. I was drawn to the theme of transformation:

1. Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus' followers are called "disciples". However, when Jesus appears to Mary, he refers to his disciples as "brothers" (v.17). It's a subtle, but profound shift. The disciples are no longer just apprentices, they're family. Why? Because through Jesus, they have been adopted as God's sons and daughters (John 1:12-13; Rom. 8:14-17; Eph. 1:5; Gal. 3:26; 1 John 3:1). There is much that could be unpacked here: What does it mean to be part of God's family?
2. When Mary discovers that she is speaking to Jesus, we can surmise that she takes hold of Jesus, holding him tight. In response, Jesus says to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. *But go...*" (v.17, my emphasis). As much as Mary may have wanted to cling to Jesus, Mary is sent by Jesus as the first witness to the resurrection. In what ways might we be tempted to cling to Jesus, to cocoon ourselves in the safety of our homes and churches, when Jesus is calling us to go? How might we be transformed for mission?
3. Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb expecting to anoint a corpse. Mary was broken and grieving, weeping for Jesus, but by the time Mary leaves the tomb she is full of joy that Jesus is alive. In her delight, Mary grabs hold of Jesus. Afterwards Mary excitedly declares the astonishing news "I have seen the Lord" (v.18), and "the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord" (v.20). The transformation is remarkable, and the joy of Jesus's resurrection kept on spreading. How easy do we find it to receive joy from the Lord? How might our churches become places that are overflowing with joy – even amidst the trials and hardships of life?

There are other transformations you could draw on too: from Jesus's absence to presence; from fear to peace (John 20:19); from doubt to faith (John 20:24-29). It might be helpful to use some illustrations about transformation, or even sharing some personal testimony of a time you or a

situation you faced was transformed. It's vital to help those listening consider what Jesus's resurrection means for them, and how it might transform their day-to-day lives.

## Prayers of Intercession

Resurrecting God,

We pray for your resurrection power to be at work in your Church today.  
Remind us that you have adopted us into your family;  
you turn our grief into eternal joy;  
and you send us to proclaim your good news to all the earth.  
May we, like Mary Magdalene, be obedient and proclaim, in word and deed,  
the truth that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead!  
Give us your boldness, and may your love, joy, and hope flow from us.

We pray now for those who need your resurrection power and hope  
in their lives today...

- ...those who are grieving the loss of loved ones.
- ...those struggling with poor physical and mental health.
- ...those facing personal battles with addictions.
- ...those trapped in poverty and systems of injustice.

May they know your presence,  
receive your hope,  
and be touched by your joy.

In Jesus's name, Amen.

## Communion

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said: 'Peace be with you!'  
Then they were glad when they saw the Lord.

Alleluia! The peace of the risen Christ be always with you.  
**And also with you. Alleluia!**

*The people may greet each other in the name of the risen Lord.*

Here is bread, God's good gift. **It will become for us the bread of life.**  
Here is wine, God's good gift. **It will become for us the cup of salvation.**

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Blessing and honour, glory and power, are rightly yours, all-gracious God.  
By your creative word you brought the world to birth;  
in your generous love you made the human family,  
that we might see your glory and live for ever in your presence.

**Blessing and honour, glory and power, are rightly yours, all-gracious God.**

When we wandered from you in our sin  
you sought us with your steadfast love and did not give us up.  
In the fullness of time you sent your Son to be our Saviour and Deliverer.  
Made of flesh and blood, he lived our life and died our death upon the cross.  
Death could not hold him and now he reigns at your right hand.

**Blessing and honour, glory and power, are rightly yours, all-gracious God.**

Therefore with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven  
we bless and praise your glorious name, saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessèd is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Blessèd indeed is the Lord Jesus Christ who, at supper with his friends,  
took bread and gave you thanks, broke it, gave it to them and said:  
'Take this, all of you, and eat it. This is my body given for you.  
Do this in remembrance of me.'

When supper was ended, he took the cup and gave you thanks,  
gave it to them, and said: 'Drink from it all of you.  
This is my blood of the new covenant,  
poured out for you and for everyone,  
for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me.'

**Dying, you destroyed our death.  
Rising, you restored our life.  
Lord Jesus, come in glory.**

Therefore, Father, we celebrate this Passover of gladness;  
for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.  
Accept, through him, our great high priest, this, our sacrifice of praise.

Send your Holy Spirit that these gifts of bread and wine

may be for us the body and the blood of Christ.  
Gather us, who share this feast, into the kingdom of your glory  
that with all your people in every time and place  
we may praise and worship you for ever;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
**by whom and with whom  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory are yours,  
heavenly Father, now and always. Amen.**

*The breaking of the bread*

Alleluia! Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.  
**Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia!**

We meet the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread.  
Draw near with faith.

*The sharing of the bread and wine*

The body of Christ, broken for you.  
The blood of Christ, shed for you and all God's people.

*adapted from 'Holy Communion for Easter Season'  
from the Methodist Worship Book*

## Offering and Blessing

We're finishing with our offering today as we want to go from worship offering all that we are to God: time, talents and treasures. So let's pray:

Gracious God,  
in Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing.  
We are chosen, made holy, and adopted into your family  
through his death and resurrection.  
We receive the priceless gifts of your love, joy and hope.  
From this place of blessing, may we overflow to bless others,  
sharing our time, talents and treasures  
for the sake of your kingdom and your glory. Amen.

May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Spirit,  
be with us all today and evermore. Amen.

<b>Hymn Suggestions</b>				
	RS	CH4	StF	MP
Christ the Lord is risen today	232	411	298	76
From heaven you came	522	374		58
Alleluia, alleluia give thanks to the risen Lord	234		295	30
He Has risen			302	839
Come ye faithful raise the strain	236	414		
How deep the Father's love for us		549		988
Come people of the risen King				1267
See what a morning			309	1105
Led like a lamb to the slaughter	241			402
Come and see			270	85
Thine be the glory	247	419	313	689

RS – *Rejoice & Sing* | CH4 – *Church Hymnary 4* | StF – *Singing the Faith* | MP – *Mission Praise*