

Easter Sunday 2021

New North Road Baptist Church

At the beginning of this service, you may want to tune into this beautiful video of two sisters singing a famous tune to different words that capture the story of Easter with wonder and joy. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

<https://youtu.be/-j3NZEedHQal>

Together with our brothers and sisters in every nation we celebrate Easter Day. Christ is Risen. He is Risen indeed.

Song

<https://youtu.be/vnOsOwGmMo>

Jesus Christ is risen today, our triumphant, holy day.

Christ, the Lord, is risen today, Alleluia!
Sons of men and angels say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, ye heavens, and earth, reply, Alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!
Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!
Once He died our souls to save, Alleluia!
Where thy victory, O grave? Alleluia!

Soar we now where Christ hath led, Alleluia!
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!
Made like Him, like Him we rise, Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

Hymns of praise then let us sing, Alleluia!
Unto Christ, our heavenly King, Alleluia!
Who endured the cross and grave, Alleluia!
Sinners to redeem and save. Alleluia!

Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!
Our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!
Who did once upon the cross, Alleluia!
Suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!

Reading

Luke 24 vs 1 -5

Prayer

You may want to take this opportunity to offer your own prayers of thanksgiving for Easter day.

God of hope, you surprised grieving women with angels who shared the good news. He is not here, he has risen.

Thank you that death was not the final word for you have raised Jesus Christ from death and overcome.

We celebrate with wonder and joy. Thank you for the cross. Thank you for the empty tomb.

As we celebrate your resurrection teach us again to live with an attitude of hope and expectancy confident that there is nothing in all creation that can separate us from your love.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Song

See what a morning

<https://youtu.be/2QqroI7WF6c>

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,
Borne 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!

Reading. John 20 vs 1-18

Song <https://youtu.be/6FouNdeqHoo>

Led like a lamb to the slaughter.

Led like a lamb to the slaughter
In silence and shame,
There on Your back You carried a world
Of violence and pain.
Bleeding, dying, bleeding, dying.

*You're alive, You're alive,
You have risen, Alleluia!
And the power and the glory is given,
Alleluia, Jesus, to You.*

At break of dawn, poor Mary,
Still weeping she came,
When through her grief she heard Your voice
Now speaking her name.
Mary, Master, Mary, Master!

At the right hand of the Father
Now seated on high
You have begun Your eternal reign
Of justice and joy.
Glory, glory, glory, glory.

Message

Over the last year we have all experienced remarkable changes in our nation because of the global pandemic. It's not surprising if some of us experience a sense of dislocation and disorientation because so much that was familiar has been denied us and many of these changes have been quite sudden, unexpected and unwelcome.

Another word for this is trauma. We have shared in the same trauma and it's worth recognising this because the trauma is something we have experienced individually, as families and as a society and trauma leaves us shaken and it's worth remembering this.

There's a real danger that we will give way the urge to return to normal and but it all behind us but it may be that simple for if we try and deny what has happened to us, we may be storing up trouble for the future. This isn't just a practical thing although we all hope the authorities will be much better prepared for the next pandemic. It is an emotional and spiritual thing to and this means we need to make time to grieve what has been lost and lament the cost. If we do this, we can begin to do what some people have described as 'building back better.

When Jesus met two disciples walking the Emmaus road on Easter Sunday, they didn't recognise him but full of grief and confusion as they were Jesus listened to them, inviting them to share all that had happened in Jerusalem and only then did he begin to remind them of all the prophets had promised. He recognised their trauma and didn't hurry them, waiting until that moment when he broke bread to surprise them with his presence and the discovery that he was alive.

I wonder if some of the disciples wondered if they could return to normal after that but of course there was no way back. They faced a new way of living with Jesus in which he lived in their hearts through faith. It was no less real but it was different.

Many of us familiar with grief so we can imagine what Mary felt when she stood outside the tomb weeping and wondering where the body of Jesus was. She didn't recognise who she saw at first. Supposing him to be the gardener she asked where have you laid him? When he replied 'Mary' she knew at once who he was, there was no mistaking his familiar voice. 'Rabbi!'

And yet this happy reunion is not Hollywood movie. Of course, she wanted to fling her arms round him but he refused telling her 'Do not cling to me because I am going to the Father but tell my brothers I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'

The disciples discovered there was no return to normal, nothing would ever be the same again.

Jesus goes before us to enter the presence of God for he has opened the way to a new relationship with God for us. The disciples had to learn a new way of being with Jesus, living not be the familiar sight and sound of him but by faith, inspired and enabled by the gift of his presence in the Holy Spirit.

It's well expressed in the words of a hymn by Brian Wren.

'Christ is alive, no longer bound to distant years in Palestine, but healing, saving here and now, he touches every place and time.'

In every nation, in every culture, in every language, in every family the gospel of Jesus Christ can find expression as people discover the transforming power of the resurrection. As Paul says in Ephesians 1 vs 19 and 20, it is the same power at work in us that raised Jesus Christ from death. That's amazing and it makes me smile!

I also want to recall the words of Desmond Tutu at this time because they capture so well what the resurrection of Jesus is about. Celebrating Easter isn't a denial of the cross, of the grief or tears, the sorrow and the anguish but a celebration that through Jesus Christ we overcome as he has overcome death itself.

'Goodness is stronger than evil, life is stronger than death, light is stronger than darkness, love is stronger than hate, victory is ours, victory is ours, through him who loved us.'

This is good news. It's worth celebrating. Christ our life, has overcome and through him we overcome not because of our own strength but because he is the way, the truth and the life.

As we emerge from our own death and resurrection experience with coronavirus let us seek to be conformed to the image of Christ in all that we become as individuals and a community of Faith that all who meet us discover the transforming power that raised Jesus Christ from death. Let us find in him the courage to overcome for in Christ we have hope that will never disappoint us.

As we do this, we cannot altogether know what our 'new normal' will be like anymore than the disciples knew what following Jesus would be like as they learned to walk by Faith. What we can do is choose to live in our 'new normal' with a willingness for the transforming love of Jesus to spill over so that the 'new normal' is different from what has gone before in positive ways that reflect the kingdom of God.

Amen.

Song

<https://youtu.be/-LwBqG7uXbY>

Because he lives

He lives, he lives Christ Jesus lives today, he walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way. You ask me how I know he lives; he lives within my heart.

Prayers of intercession

This is an opportunity to name in God's presence the people and places for who you are concerned. As you have probably been watching the news you will be aware of much of what is happening but I especially commend to your prayers for the nation of Iran and for Christians in Iran many of whom will be celebrating Easter in secret. For

some of our Iranian brothers and sisters at New North road this is their first Easter as Christians.

Please pray that the proposals from the Home Office concerning asylum will focus on targeting people-traffickers and not victims of persecution who flee in danger of their lives.

Continue to give thanks for the new vaccines and pray for a just and equitable distribution of the vaccines, that people's fears about this will be overcome and that the poorest nations will not be excluded.

Please pray for your families, friends and neighbours.

You may also want to share in this prayer

God our Father, in these strange days we are living through, thank you for everyone who is on the frontline. Give wisdom to all who govern us and make decisions on our behalf. We thank you that the tide is turning and that is being overcome. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

You may want to conclude with the words of the Lord's prayer.

Song to reflect

If you have access to the internet you may want to listen to this song on You Tube.

I know that my redeemer lives- Nicole C Mullen, A cappella version.

<https://youtu.be/fktj1yOO2nQ>

Final song

Thine be the Glory

I hope you will be familiar with this hymn and be able to share it together.

Thine is the glory,
Risen, conquering Son;
Endless is the victory,
Thou o'er death hast won;
Angels in bright raiment
Rolled the stone away,
Kept the folded grave clothes
Where Thy body lay.
Thine is the glory,
Risen conquering Son,
Endless is the victory,
Thou o'er death hast won.

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 hath lost its sting.
Thine is the glory,
Risen conquering Son,
Endless is the victory,
Thou o'er death hast won

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 is the glory,
Risen conquering Son,
Endless is the victory,
Thou o'er death hast won.

Blessing

God of Grace

When the earth was sleeping, the tomb was opened and the women found it empty.

They were surprised by your presence in a new and unexpected way.

Go on surprising us with your Grace that we may live in the hope of your resurrection.

And may God's blessing, Father, Son and Holy Spirit remain and abide with you.

Amen.

29th March 2021

Dear Friends

This week the pastoral letter is very simple.

Happy Easter

Christ is Risen

Alleluia!

I look forward to seeing you later in the year as things begin to open up.

Now that we can meet more freely out of doors I would be glad to visit you in your garden or go for a walk about the local park. Do let me know if that is something you would like.

May you know the transforming power of our Lord Jesus Christ who was raised from death, this Easter.

Your friend and pastor

Mark