

Worship Resource for Easter Sunday April 12

For those who wish to have Worship at Home at their own pace (without Zoom)



This resource is for those who wish to Worship at Home in their own time. A separate resource is available of those who wish to join in with others using Zoom.

The service starts on page 3. First, let's get ready.

Preparing for Worship

Prepare your **meal** and your **space**.

Each week during the Easter season (which runs right up to Pentecost) we'll share our worship time together over a meal or snack.

Gathering around a computer or screen can feel 'less than holy'. These spaces are usually for work time or relaxing time. So, in order to make this an intentionally sacred space, here are a few ideas:

- Gather at your kitchen or dining table, with a laptop or tablet or a printout of this resource if you can. This allows you to participate with one another with space for your food and for you to write and colour. If you are unable to gather at a larger table, use a smaller, dedicated surface.
- In the middle of your table, place a candle and matches, a pen/pencil, an empty plate and a glass. You will also need a piece of paper torn in half, a small stone for each person, and a simple cross. Place the cross down and cover it with the paper and the stone/s. (You may still have these on display from Good Friday's Worship at Home.)
- There is also a colouring in page. Print one of these out and have some colour pencils or textas ready. Throughout worship time, you will hear or read the word "heart" again and again. To focus on the heart of the matter, colour or doodle in a heart each time you hear the word "heart."
- During this time when we are not able to worship in our church building, you might like to keep this home worship space set up throughout this time to remind you of God's constant presence in our lives.
- Your meal could be your breakfast or a light snack with a cuppa or juice. If it is warm, keep it covered as we won't start eating until part way through the service.

Heart of the Matter – An Easter Season Series

*“Day by day, as they **spent much time together** in the temple, they **broke bread at home** and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, **praising God** and **having the goodwill** of all the people.”*

(Acts 2: 46-47a)

Through this Easter season, which will run right through to Pentecost, we will be following our spiritual ancestor’s traditions as outlined in this scripture. We are creating a “temple” of worship in our hearts whether we can be physically together or not. By sharing in words and music and breathing and eating and moving together, we will stay connected. The earliest Christians worshiped in their homes before they had churches, and so will we, until we can meet again in our church building. Because at the “heart of the matter,” we are connected through the Spirit that makes us one in love.

The life and death of Jesus had one strong message: love one another. The heart of the matter was love. Time and again we hear Jesus offer the disciples a post-resurrection message of empowerment to give to the world what he had given to them. This Easter Season we will encourage one another to truly live out the heart of the matter.

Adapted from www.worshipdesignstudio.com/series by Dr. Marcia McFee



Worship

This service is adapted from resources provided by Dr Marcia McPhee and Rev Cheryl Wilson. Other sources are acknowledged within the text below.

9:25am Gathering

Gather at your table with your meal and all the elements needed for worship ready to go as we join together in Worship at Home.

Don't light your candle yet!

9.30am Spend Time

Let's pay attention to the common rhythm that makes us one: our heartbeats.

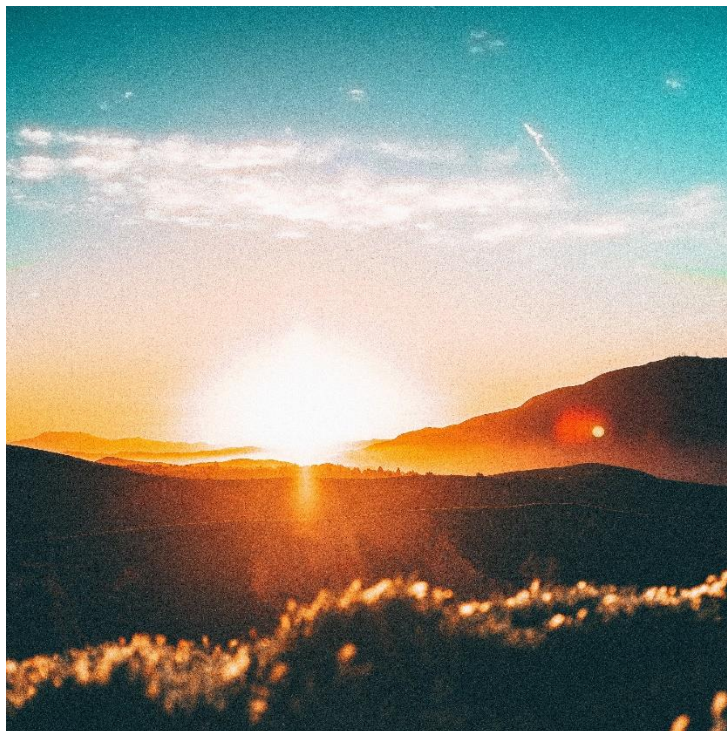
At "the heart of the matter" is our connection to all of creation through the one fragile thing we are so aware of in this time: life. And so we begin with an action of taking a deep breath and making a soft heartbeat with a tapping on our chests together.

Breathe in slowly. Breathe out slowly. Gently tap on your chest in the rhythm of your heartbeat.

Set the Scene

If you are able, play this video with sound: Sunrise https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_kgdCGisso

If not, spend a moment reflecting on this photo by Jordan Wozniak (from Unsplash.)



After the events of Holy Week, the disciples are devastated. They are in the midst of full-blown grief and disbelief. Into the heart of that grief came a stunning revelation – life had overcome death. Love had won out over violence. God’s faithfulness would build them up once again. God’s love will bind them together.

Is this possible in our lives? Today’s worship will say, “Yes, it can! Come and see! Live and love! This is the heart of the matter!”

Let us hear what happened early that Sunday morning...

Read: Matthew 28:1-10 (NIV)

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.” So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them.

“Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Read out loud the Easter affirmation: **Alleluia! Christ is risen: Christ is risen indeed!**

Remove the stone/s and the paper which are covering your cross.

Light your candle to celebrate the resurrection of Christ, the light of the world, and place it in a safe place.

Break Bread

We have gathered with food to nourish our bodies even as we nourish our souls together in worship. This is very much what our spiritual ancestors did as they gathered in those early days in houses. They would bring what they had and share with each other. Let us pray:

Holy Life-Giver, we gather in your name, invited by Jesus, bound together with your Spirit, in union with each other. Feed our bodies and our spirits with your comforting presence so that we might be your comfort to others. Bless this food and break open our hearts. Bless this drink and pour out your love. Amen...

Let us begin to “break bread” (eat) while we “break open the Word” in our scriptures.

Enjoy your meal!



Reflection 1

“Do not be afraid! He is not here, he has risen from the dead” (Matthew 28:5 -6)

Thus spoke an angel to quell the fear and confusion of the women who came to the tomb of Jesus of Nazareth on the morning of the 3rd day after his crucifixion.

All four Gospels give a surprising similar account of that Sunday morning. Over the next days numbers of people had encounters with Jesus. Fear and grief turned to joy and belief

The risen Christ has changed the course of history. We are very privileged to live on this side of the cross and resurrection. In his life, death and resurrection we are able to see the love, the compassion, the mercy of the Creator, God, revealed to us through him.

The spirit of Creation, the spirit of Divine love is available to all who seek. That perfect love casts out fear. Love overcomes all that is unloving. Death cannot defeat Love. Love will always arise, often in a different format and will ultimately win through. Jesus shows us the way.

The Creator’s Divine spirit, revealed in Jesus Christ changes the course of history. He does it by changing you and me.

Praise be to God.

Nola Pearce



“Worry Stone” invitation

In the account of the resurrection in the Gospel of Matthew, after the stone is rolled away from the tomb, the angel sits on the stone and gives the women this message, “Don’t be afraid.” Throughout the Season of Easter, we invite you to use a “worry stone,” which is a stone you carry about with you to rub when you are feeling anxious or worried. We encourage you to use your stone from this morning or find the one you took home at the beginning of Lent. Find some time this week to paint or draw a heart on it. It will remind you of this angel’s message which Jesus later repeats, “Do not be afraid!”

Hold on to your stone now as we continue.

Reflection 2

Each morning when you wake up, do you turn on the news to check where things are at: how many more cases of coronavirus, how many have died, what is happening overseas?



As a society, we feel a deep grief over what is happening around us. We grieve the loss of our social activities, connections, workplaces, incomes, gym programs, weekly coffee catch ups, all that which makes up our everyday lives.

On that first Easter morning, two women rose early, checking in to see where things were at. They too were feeling deep grief, at the loss of Jesus, their friend and great prophet and teacher. Nothing could prepare them for what they were to find: an earthquake, an angel, the stone rolled away, the body gone.

The tomb was empty, with dramatic and eternal consequences.

“He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.”

From death comes new life.

This Easter, like the tomb, our church buildings are empty. We gather separately to celebrate this most Holy day. Our church, along with most of our society, has been dramatically turned upside down. We might pause to wonder what consequences this might have in the long-term. Although we have lost the ability to worship and serve as we usually do, new ways of connecting, new ways of serving, new ways of being the church are opening up before us.

New opportunities arise, as from death comes new life.

On that first Easter morning, the women hurried from the tomb, afraid yet full of joy, to discover more about what this might mean. And on the way, they encountered the risen Christ. They experienced for themselves the power of God.

“Do not be afraid”, they were told. Go and tell the other disciples; go and proclaim the good news of Easter; go and live out your faith.

The risen Christ doesn't take away all our fears, but gives us courage to face those fears, to get on with living, and strength to continue. Afraid, yet full of joy.

Fear and joy. Despair and hope. Uncertainty and faith. Each of these are part of our everyday lives. But in Christ's resurrection, we experience for ourselves the power of God, and the truth that life is stronger than death, love is greater than hate, forgiveness overcomes judgement, and that the fear and pain of our lives are transient and do not represent the final reality. The Easter promise is that joy, hope and faith ultimately prevail. This brings us hope to endure, and great expectations of the future God has for us, and for God's church.

Respond

On your torn piece of paper, draw a symbol of new life. It could be an egg, or a butterfly, or a cross.

Spend some time in prayer, doodling on your drawing while reflecting on the balance, in your life, between fear and joy, despair and hope, uncertainty and faith.

What hopes, dreams and great expectations do you have for our society and our church into the future? Where might there be new opportunities?



Confess

As you hold your stone in your hands...

Feel its roughness: *where are the rough edges in your life?*
Feel its weight: *what is weighing you down?*
Feel its hardness: *when have you been hard and unreceptive towards others?*
The stone came from the earth: *in what ways have you failed to care for God's creation?*
The stone was rolled away to reveal the empty tomb: *what needs to be removed for you to come before God, empty and ready to be filled with God's love?*

Gracious God, hear our prayers:

We come before you confessing our roughness, our burdens.

We acknowledge that we do not always care for your creation, and we know that there are many things you need to deal with in our lives.

Forgive us when we fail to make the risen Christ evident through our words, our actions, and our lives.

Amen

We know the promise of Easter, that new life comes from death, and new opportunities are found in the risen Christ.

Our sins are forgiven: Thanks be to God!

Empty Hands

In more 'normal' times, many congregations would share Holy Communion together on Easter morning, as a very powerful and significant remembering and participation in Christ's death and resurrection.

As we gather separately, we miss sharing together in fellowship, we miss singing and praying together, and we miss participating in the blessing of Communion. However, the risen Christ is with us, and we affirm this in a Liturgy of empty hands.

That first Easter morning, the women found an empty tomb.

Alleluia! Christ is risen: Christ is risen indeed!

This Easter morning, the church building is empty.

Alleluia! Christ is risen: Christ is risen indeed!

This Easter morning, our plate and cup and hands are empty.

Alleluia! Christ is risen: Christ is risen indeed!

We are empty, open to receive what God has to give us.

Fill us, O Lord, with your spirit of love.

Fill us, O Lord, with your spirit of joy.

Fill us, O Lord, with your spirit of hope.



We hear the great story of our faith:

The Lord Jesus, on the night of his betrayal, took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way he took the cup, saying:

This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.

Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.

Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the death of the risen Lord, until he comes.

This Easter morning, even though our plate and cup are empty, we proclaim the presence of the risen Lord with us. So let us give thanks to the Lord our God:

It is right that we should always offer thanks, O God, because you have created and sustained us and all things. And so we praise you with the faithful of every time and place, joining with the choirs of angels and the whole creation in the eternal hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

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. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

This Easter morning, as we gather separately, we affirm the Spirit of Christ in our midst, wherever we are. Christ cannot be bound by a cross, a tomb, a church, or by our expectations.

Lift up the empty plate,

and give thanks that Christ is the bread of life, who satisfies the hungry heart.

Lift up the empty cup,

and give thanks that in Christ our cup overflows with abundant life. God gives us all good gifts.

Place the plate and cup on the table.

Think about those all over the world who also have no bread at this time.

Think about all those in the world whose situation makes it impossible to practise physical distancing; or who have no access to running water or hand sanitiser. May the Holy Spirit inspire in us the courage and compassion to make a difference in their lives from our position of privilege.

Think about Jesus' love poured out over all of humanity, bringing justice and healing.



Consider again your own empty hands.

Think about how those hands might reach out with hospitality and compassion to those in need in your community.

Pray once again:

We are empty, open to receive what God has to give us

Fill us, O Lord, with your spirit of love.

Fill us, O Lord, with your spirit of joy.

Fill us, O Lord, with your spirit of hope.

In these empty vessels and in our empty hands, we celebrate the mystery and wonder of the empty tomb. In our hands and in our hearts, we leave space for resurrection, for new life, for new opportunities.

Adapted from Litany of Empty Hands © Amelia Koh-Butler, 2020.

Alleluia! Christ is risen:

Christ is risen indeed!

Offering

All that we are, and all that we have is first a gift from God. Our offering to God is from the fullness of all we have received, from the depth of our hearts. You may wish to consider how you can use the gifts God has given to you at this time: gifts of kindness and compassion, gifts of skills and knowledge, gifts of money and time, gifts of love and connection. Let us give of our offering with grateful hearts.

Adapted from The Centre for Music Liturgy and the Arts: "Tethered to God – Palm Sunday" from "Worship in Times of Isolation"

Praise God!

It is time to praise God and raise our endorphin levels to improve our heart-health, both physically and spiritually! So whether your "dance" is in your bed, clapping in your chair, or moving all over the living room, it's time for the Easter Season Dance Party! If you are going to dance standing up, go ahead and get ready. And let's start with this affirmation:

We know Jesus is present among us even in this very home.

We will not let fear be louder than love

but with glad hearts and rejoicing souls, we will sing God's praise

for we are Easter People!

Let's choose to dance and whistle with joy!

The Lord of the Dance

Let's sing and whistle along with the Choir and Congregation of First Plymouth Church, Lincoln Nebraska

Play this link if you are able: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xkk0YodJqH8>



Have Goodwill - Spread Joy

That was great! We hope you feel some good vibes right now. So while we have our energy up, let's send some energy out to the world that needs it! What message does the world need? Perhaps you will decide to create a way to let more and more people know the good news that Jesus is alive!

After worship today, you might like to have a dance party through your neighbourhood! Dress up in colourful clothes (the wackier the better to let loose!), grab some props (dancing ribbons, instruments), and choose a few songs you can move to. Have an adult drive slowly around the block with the music turned up, while your whole crew sings and dances to the music. Or you could continue the dance party right where you are!

OR If you have not yet given out your Self-Isolation Kindness Calling card, now is a time to think about who you could give this to. You can print out more from our website:

<https://athelstonechurch.org.au/members-2/forms/>

Looking Ahead

Did you know that Easter is more than just a day? Easter is a season of eight Sundays that last from today until Pentecost Sunday, a time when we celebrate the Spirit of Christ in the church as the presence of Jesus' work ongoing in the world. During the Easter Season, we will continue to hear more about Jesus' message of what is truly the "heart of the matter" in our lives. We will gather each week around a meal. You can make breakfast and have it ready on your tables just in time for worship. We will incorporate eating together as we "break bread" and break open the Word of God and break open our lives with each other. We will be incorporating all ages into the service and so this will be a great way to bring everyone together to share it with loved ones who may be with you in your homes. But we would also love for you to invite anyone that you really miss and wish was at your tables with you such as loved ones—families or friends—across the kms. We'll be gathering by Zoom and there will be print copies of the service for those who wish to worship in their own time at their own pace. Please feel free to forward these on to others.

Benediction

(based on Psalm 16)

As we close this time together, remember:

God is always with you. No matter what you face, no matter what trials or hardships come your way, God is right beside you, raising your very life from death, guiding and directing your path. So, acknowledge your fear and your worry and know it is as true and holy as any feeling, including joy and hope and love.

Take heart, my friends! This is the heart of the matter.

Let the people say, **Amen!**



Spreading Joy

For those of you who are on social media, please take a photo of your lit candle and post it online. #churchconnected #churchscattered #churchungathered

Further Worship Ideas

Here are some more ways that you can connect with God's Word:

- Morialta Uniting Church have a weekly worship service on YouTube. Click here for more information: <http://www.morialtauca.org.au/virtual-church/>
- Tune in to LifeFM radio station 107.9 at 10am and hear Mod Bronte Wilson share a message of hope
- "A Sermon For Every Sunday" website has produced a worship service outline to use with others at home. Click here for a link to the resource. It also includes a link to sermons to listen to: <https://mailchi.mp/asermonforeverysunday/this-weeks-sermon-1744145?e=e9aed2be77>
- Songs of Praise – a TV show with inspiring hymns and songs, together with uplifting stories of faith from around the UK and beyond is available on ABC TV and ABC iview
- The Synod of South Australia has published a full list of online congregations and resources. <https://sa.uca.org.au/documents/resources-board/Being-the-Church-in-Ungathered-Times.pdf>
- The Assembly are live-streaming services: <https://assembly.uca.org.au/news/item/3158-livestreaming-on-assembly-platforms>

Take heart! Sampling many services, as Bishop Megan Traquair (Episcopal Diocese of Northern California) joyously proclaimed last week, is "like hearing Pentecost take place right here in March!" (World in Prayer)

Worship and other Creative Ideas for Children and Families

- Illustrated Ministry have these resources available for free: <https://illstrtdm.in/Easter2020>
- Faith Family Trail At Home
Explore the events of the Easter story through a variety of activity stations. Each station has a theme, Bible passage, questions to chat about, and simple activity and prayer ideas. Using locations and items from around the home, your household can choose at least one activity in the lead up to or during Easter. This is a great opportunity to grow faith at home for people of all ages, particularly families with children under 12. Most of the ideas use multiple senses to engage with the Easter story. Go here to download your own copy: <https://sa.uca.org.au/documents/intergen-docs/resources/Print-Easter-Family-Faith-Trail-Book.pdf>
(Messy Church families will receive their own printed copy in the Messy Easter at Home pack.)
- The Worshipping with Children Ministry site has newly posted resources for Children's worship at home. <http://worshippingwithchildren.blogspot.com/p/date-index.html>
- Have you gone for a bear hunt in the neighbourhood yet? Can you pray for the homes that you pass as you go?

