



MOSMAN UNITING CHURCH

4th April 2021

Easter Sunday

Words in bold are spoken by the congregation.

Adapted from a service devised and written, and hymns chosen, by Rev. Dr. William Ives. Led by David Garrett.

ORGAN PRELUDE

GATHERING AS GOD'S PEOPLE

WELCOME

The Lord be with you!

And also with you

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We honour the Elders past, present and emerging, of the Cammeraygal People, the traditional custodians of the land on which we stand.

WE LIGHT THE CHRIST CANDLE

Jesus Christ is a light to the World

Thanks be to God

GREETING

Friends, the tomb is empty! The stone has been rolled away!

Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed!

For three days he lay in the cold and lonely cave.

But God's love cannot be contained by anything, not even death!

Thanks be to God, who gives us victory through our Risen Lord.

Death has been swallowed up in victory!

Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?

Christ is risen!

He is risen, indeed!

Come, let us worship the Risen Christ!

PRAYER OF ADORATION

Truly you have risen Lord

Let the Gospel trumpet sound

Let angels in heaven rejoice

Let the whole Church on earth sing glad Halleluiahs

Let sorrowing ones take heart

Let drooping heads be lifted up

Let the dying anticipate entering your glorious kingdom

Let all your people witness to the living Christ within them

Let the whole of creation be glad

For earth's saddest day and earth's gladdest day are just one day apart.

**Living God, our hearts are filled with joy
We have not voices grand enough nor strong enough
Nor words nor music magnificent enough
To express the wonder, the gratitude we feel,
The adoration and praise flow from within us
For our time of release has come
Our long night of sin and sorrow and death is passed
And with the bursting open of our prison doors
We are welcomed into the glorious sunlight of the day of
resurrection
You, our God have given us new light, new life, new joy, new
hope in raising our Lord Jesus from the dead. Our
Hallelujahs break forth.
We worship our Lord and Risen King. Amen**

HYMN 362 "Jesus Christ is Risen Today"

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O God, we cannot reconcile the joy, the gladness, the wonder, the light, the hope and the peace of Easter, with our own sin and failure.

**But in the death and resurrection of Jesus
you show you are the reconciling God.**

We want to know deep within us the forgiveness and the new life you give in the Risen Christ.

So we come confessing our sin.

With sorrow for our failure,

With shame for our weakness,

With tears for our insensitivity,

And pleading for your love and forgiveness.

Restore us to true fellowship with you and to life in the Holy Spirit,

For the sake of Jesus, Your Son. Amen

COLLECT

Lord of life and power,
through the mighty resurrection of your Son
you have overcome the old order of sin and death
and have made all things new in him.
May we, being dead to sin
and alive to you in Jesus Christ,
reign with him in glory,
who, with you and the Holy Spirit ever lives,
one God, from all eternity. Amen

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Christ died for our sins that we might live
as forgiving and forgiven people.
Christ has died, Christ is risen. You are forgiven!
Thanks be to God.

THE PEACE

On Easter Day members greet each other with the words:
“Peace be with you. The Lord is Risen!” and the response **“He
is risen indeed!”**

RECEIVING GOD’S WORD

BIBLE READING

John 20: 1-18

This is the word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

HYMN 390 "Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks"

REFLECTION "Nevertheless" *by Rev. Dr. William Ives (adapted).*

John 20: 18 *Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord".*

On Easter Day, God says a resounding "Yes" to the world.

It's a yes we can echo for we get the message today, 'Christ is risen from the dead!'

Because he lives, we shall live also.

We have learned from childhood to say 'yes' to the resurrection.

We learn of God as a loving Father who has said 'yes' to all of our needs, so that we are enabled to say 'yes' back to him.

Because the loveliness of creation is God's 'Yes'.

It is the air we breathe.

The food we enjoy.

The creation of art and music.

Life as God meant it to be.

So we begin to learn to say 'Yes. Yes. Yes.' back to God.

God said 'Yes' to his people Israel.

He saved them from slavery in Egypt and gave them the Promised Land.

They learned, often the hard way, but eventually, to say 'Yes' to God.

So, at a time when life has taken a negative turn for us and the whole world around us with the catastrophic covid-19 pandemic, we too must learn to say 'Yes' to God.

God says 'Yes' to his people in Jesus Christ.

All of God's promises are fulfilled in Jesus.

This Easter day let's consider Mary Magdalene who had learned to say 'Yes' to life, through Jesus. Her life was an absolute mess. But Jesus lifted her up with his words, his actions and his teaching and she found real life through him.

She was like so many others: Zacchaeus, the disciples, the sick, the blind, the lame, the unstable of mind, the confused.

They heard Jesus say: 'Yes!

And today, above all days, God's greatest 'Yes' is shouted to the world.

"Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed!"

He has destroyed the powers of sin and death. He has broken down the barriers. He has opened the gates of eternal life to us.

Well, Mary Magdalene was on a high. Life had become absolutely marvellous in Jesus' company. Everything was positive.

With him there was nothing she couldn't face. Perhaps that's how things were for us before the virus came.

Then suddenly for Mary, as for us, her 'Yes' was confronted by a gigantic 'NO!'

Jesus was crucified.

The powers of evil, the enemies of Jesus said 'No' to him. Suddenly everything came to an end on a cross and a tomb in a garden.

The reality in life is that beside a clear and resounding 'Yes', there can come what seems like an equally, and sometimes louder 'No!' That's life, isn't it?

But there have to be 'No's in our lives. Our pathways must be through dark valleys as well as on mountaintops. Just as is happening with the world pandemic.

Although God is our 'Yes' in life, God also can say, 'No.'

God said 'No' to his people Israel again and again. It was necessary to teach them. The commandments had a lot of no's in them – the "Thou Shalt Not's".

Our natural expectation in life is that everything should go along swimmingly. Some think that if we are Christians, nothing should go wrong.

Mary Magdalene seems to have had this outlook. But after the shock and horror of that dreadful night of Jesus' arrest and trial, the next day was his agonizing death. God had ignored her desperate prayers and the prayers of the disciples asking God to prevent Jesus' death.

Why? Why is it possible that God could say 'No'?

Let's try to see.

We are all like poor Mary. We all find it hard to deal with the big no's in life. Especially when it's a death. We can't understand how God could possibly allow such a thing to happen. There's a terror about it – such anguish, such unbelievable, ongoing pain. Most of us know it. All the yeses of life suddenly disappear, just as many people the world over are finding with the present crisis.

So what can anyone do?

Well, early on the morning of the first day of the week, Mary goes to the tomb as if trying to get her life together again.

Then, as if Jesus' death isn't enough, she discovers his body is missing. Not another No!

That's how it was for Mary. Overcome with grief and blinded by tears,

all she can do is ask questions. "What's happened to the body of Jesus?"

She doesn't even recognize Jesus beside her until he says, "Mary!"

Now, this is where Mary learns, and we must learn, that with God's yes, there is not only an element of 'No'. There is another dimension – "Nevertheless".

We must learn this word and apply it to life. It hovers around in the background when God's yeses seem denied. It is the word of resurrection. It is the word of hope. It is the word that tells us that despite all negative appearances, not all is lost. It is the word of grace. It is the word that tells us that God is still in control however bleak things may appear to be.

For, you see this is an orderly world. Evil things will happen.

Every day is a mixture and we can't escape it.

Every day something goes wrong.

Every day is a day of death.

Every day is a day of darkness.

Every day is a day of suffering of one kind or another.

Every day is a day of evil.

But the wonderful thing is that the negatives are not all decisive.

For every day is also a day of Jesus Christ.

Every day is a day after his resurrection.

Every day is a day of victory through him –

no matter how bad things may appear to be.

Every day is a day lived in His presence, a day in his life.

Every day is a day of his power.

Jesus is God's nevertheless!

In spite of everything, nevertheless, Jesus lives and ultimately life can be positive for us.

That is Easter.

Life isn't full of sunshine. There will be clouds and shadows. Tough things happen. When they do, don't give up. No matter what the world deals out to us, be it war, bushfires, floods, recessions or even pandemics. Nevertheless, God's goodness will shine through. That's faith. That's what keeps the Christian going. That's what has kept the Church going for 2,000 years and will do forever.

That's what Mary learned that day in the Garden of Resurrection. Nevertheless, God acts. It is the power of God that raises new life and great possibilities.

We are victors through Christ who says:

"Whatever happens with you, "Nevertheless, I am with you always.'

And now to Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and forever. Amen

WORK AND WITNESS OF THE CHURCH

OFFERING

O God, may these, our offerings, expand your work in the world and add gifts to many people's lives.

Bless all that we have given today. Amen.

PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Risen Lord Jesus make your life-giving resurrection power known to all who this day especially need you.

Those who feel cut off from you.

Those burdened by their sins or their worries, or their heavy responsibilities.

Those who feel that the joy has gone out of their lives, whatever the reason.

Those burdened with illness, or age, and those who cannot care for themselves.

Those who care for others, especially those who day in and day out must respond to the many demands for the well-being of others.

Those living in fear, those who doubt, those who just can't cope with life

Those who are close to death, and those who mourn the loss of one dearer than life itself.

Those who feel the burden of their guilt.

Those in poverty, all refugees, the hungry and the homeless

Those who yearn for broken relationships to be mended

May all know You and the power of your healing,
your resurrection love.

Lord Jesus, even though some may know pain, anguish, affliction and misery may they discover the fellowship of your suffering and experience your victory, and your peace.

You who are King of all Kings and Lord of all Lords,

Our Risen Redeemer, to whom and through whom we pray on
this resurrection day
Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**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 for ever. Amen.**

BEING SENT ON GOD'S MISSION

HYMN 380 "Thine be the Glory"

PRAYER

We have been at the empty tomb.
We have heard again of God's great power and love.
Go into the world with the good news of Easter – the
Resurrection

We will proclaim it with hope and joy in our lives.
Jesus lives and works among us.
We go, commissioned for ministry in the power of His Spirit.

BLESSING AND THREEFOLD AMEN

Now the God of peace,
who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
that great shepherd of the sheep,
through the blood of the everlasting covenant,
Make us perfect in every good work to do his will,
working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight,
through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever.

AMEN AMEN AMEN

ORGAN POSTLUDE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Many thanks to David for leading our worship today.

We are very grateful to Rev. Dr. Bill Ives for preparing this service for Easter Sunday.

If you would like to talk to a minister of religion, we suggest you contact the Reverend Michael Thomas, minister of Crows Nest Uniting Church. Look on our website for details.

Revised Common Lectionary. Our readings for next Sunday will be chosen from the following list. Acts 4:32-35; 1 John 1:1-2:2; John 20:19-31.

ICC Prayer: We pray for Rev Brett Graham and the people of Scots Kirk.

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