

Haverhill Methodist Church – Worship at Home
Easter Sunday 4th April 2021

Welcome Message – Revd. Peter Goodhall

A very Happy Easter to you and your family.

May you be blessed and filled with hope and joy as you join in this act of worship. We unite with countless Christians around the world and around the Throne to worship our risen Lord and Saviour and to crown him our King.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Hymn/song

Prayer of Praise

This is the day that you have made, life-giving God.

Joining with angels and archangels and with the chorus that is rising throughout all the earth, we will rejoice and be glad this day.

You take our endings and you make your new beginnings.

You surprise and astound us in places where we expected that you were absent.

You challenge us to reconsider what is possible.

Living Lord, Saviour Christ, we praise you, for you are raised by the power of God and there is a new creation and, by your grace, we are in it! Alleluia! **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession

Christ has risen and we have risen to new life with him.

Yet we must confess the ways we have continued to remain in our tombs of sin and death.

Living Lord, when we stand before the empty tomb we don't always feel the joy of resurrection. We feel fear, doubt, and distrust.

We feel empty. Our big questions loom large.

Forgive the fear that paralyzes us at the brink of new life.

Forgive our doubt of your love.

Forgive our distrust of your surprising, joyous plan.

Fill our emptiness with your glorious light.

Raise us to abundant new life for the glory of your name.

Wake up, sleeper!

Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.
Christ has died for our sins. We are forgiven.
Christ calls us to new life.
Christ will lead us into righteousness. Thank you God.
Amen.

Bible Readings

Mark chapter 16 verses 1-8
1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses 1-11

Hymn/song

Easter Message

The tragedy of Good Friday was fresh in their minds.
The women went to honour the dead.
They took spices to anoint Jesus' body, to reclaim him back from the cruelty of men.
Walking together in the early morning light, the women asked one another "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" The weight was too much for them. They knew they did not have the strength. Even their combined efforts would have fallen short. But, unknowingly, God had done for them what they could not do for themselves. On Easter Day the impossible became possible. God had rolled away the stone. God removed the obstacle that would reveal the empty tomb. God is still moving obstacles to faith today in your life and mine. What is that obstruction in your life? What closed door are you powerless to open?
Listen to these words of Irene May Brignall:
'A similar kind of stone can lie deep in the human heart, covering a multitude of hurts and sorrows, deeply buried beneath the stone. A mysterious hand can move this stone and uncover all that lies hidden there, shining his light into our darkness. The power that moves the hand, to move this stone, is the same power that moved another stone in a garden tomb a long time ago in Jerusalem. This same hand is still reaching out to us to heal all the lies buried beneath our stones'. At Easter we trust God's strength and not our own. God can move mountains and gravestones. God can do it. God's resurrection power is at work in your life and your situation. Now, shocked by this unexpected discovery, the women bravely entered the tomb of Jesus. Then came an even greater shock.

They saw a young man dressed in white robe.

Here was an angel messenger from God with a message of hope and a word of instruction. "Don't be alarmed, or distressed or astonished" (But of course they were!)

"You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified". (Two titles both expressing shame. The angel described both what Jesus was before and what he was now.) "He has risen! He is not here! (Jesus was alive again!) "See the place where they laid him". (The location was right) "Go, tell his disciples and Peter 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you' ". (In effect, the women were to give an invitation to the disciples to meet the risen Jesus).

For these women, in this moment, because of the Angel's message, everything had changed. This plot-twist left them utterly confused.

In Mark's words, they left the tomb with both trauma and ecstasy.

They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid.

They couldn't put what had happened to them into words.

Today, as disciples of Jesus we too find ourselves somewhere between trauma and ecstasy. Our world has changed. We live in the midst of death. Our world has seen so many tombs, marked and unmarked in this COVID19 pandemic. There has been no end of hearts broken through loss and grief and no end of tears wept. Many still wait for the day of resurrection and reunion. On this Easter Day it is okay to still weep and mourn, it is okay to keep asking our questions. There is room this Easter Day for silence as well as speech. Because of the empty cross and the empty tomb there is room for hope.

The message of Easter is that pain and loss is not forever.

The heavy stone of lockdown will roll away. We will come back to life. We will move from the grave to the garden and from the garden to what lies ahead of us. We can look forward with hope. Jesus has gone on ahead of us.

Just as Jesus broke out of his tomb, the church of God has broken out from its walls of stone and wood. But we must not lose the memory of being together. Galilee awaits us. There you will see him, just as he told you. There, the church's song will begin again. As God's witnesses, we go on together from tragedy to triumph filled with new life and new love. Amen.

Hymn/song

Prayers of Thanksgiving & Intercession

Risen Lord, receive our prayers of thanksgiving –
for the graciousness with which you hear
for the patience with which you listen
for the grace with which you care

Risen Lord, receive our prayers of thanksgiving...
for the ways you accompany us through deep valleys
for the ways you lead us by quiet waters
for the ways you provide all we need.

Risen Lord, receive our prayers of thanksgiving -
for transforming death in resurrection life
for speaking words of peace and comfort,
for opening our eyes to recognize you.

Risen Lord, hear our cry for help –
for those surrounded by the shroud of death
for mourners laying flowers on graves today
for those weighed down with worries
for those carrying the burden of distress
for those overwhelmed by isolation

Risen Lord, hear our cry for help –
for those who are weary
for those who are tattered and torn
for those who collapse from exhaustion

Risen Lord, hear our prayers for communities of faith –
that we retain memory of being together
that we embrace unity in the reality of distance
that we foresee a future side-by-side, hand-in-hand

Risen Lord, hear our prayers for communities of faith –
that we sense purpose beyond ourselves
that we perceive the needs of creation
that we stretch ourselves to respond
that our ways be formed by Your Way
that our lives be shaped by Your Life
that our love be Your Love

We ask these prayers in your precious name. **Amen.**

Unite your prayers with the whole church as you pray
The Lord's Prayer. 'Our Father...'

Hymn/song

The Blessing

We offer our lives and our gifts to the Lord.

The Psalmist says,

'I am sure I shall see the goodness of our God in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!'

The risen Christ is with us.

Be encouraged, and encourage one another.

Go and share the Good News.

Remain with hope; the risen Lord goes before you.

Remain at peace; the risen Lord goes with you.

Remain in love, the risen Lord lives within you.

May his blessing rest on you and all you remember this Easter and forevermore. **Amen.**

Coffee Time Conversation

- What are you feeling as you come to the empty tomb this Easter? Take it to the Lord in prayer.
- Is your life in any rut or routine where you need the stone to be moved? Ask the Lord to move powerfully in your life.
- Name signs of new life and new hope today.
Thank God for them.

Suggested Hymns and Songs of Resurrection

More Traditional Music:

Thine be the glory
Christ the Lord is risen today
Crown him with many crowns
When I survey the wondrous cross

More Contemporary Music:

See what a morning
Lord I lift your name on high
O praise the name (I cast my mind to Calvary)

And Finally...

*Tomb, thou shalt not hold Him longer;
Death is strong, but Life is stronger;
Stronger than the dark, the light;
Stronger than the wrong, the right;
Faith and Hope triumphant say,
Christ will rise on Easter Day.*

By Phillips Brooks

Keep social distancing.
Keep safe.
Keep communicating.
God bless you and keep you until we meet again.
My prayers are with you.
Happy Easter!

With love,

Peter