

All Saints Methodist Church Easter Sunday 12 April 2020 Order of Service

Please note before the Service begins:

1 Normally the congregation would be dressing the cross with flowers during the first hymn. Instead in our changed situation you may wish to have before you a cross and/or a flower; PS there will also be a cross dressed with flowers at the main entrance to the church for public viewing.

2 Again our church service would normally conclude with Holy Communion. In its place I suggest you have a piece of bread within reach to which I shall refer during the service.

3 The theme given in the Lent and Easter booklet is "Is there hope?"

The Service begins with the Easter Greeting

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

We lift up our hearts to give you thanks, our God of new beginnings.

From the beginning of creation onwards, you have been bringing newness to be, causing chaos to be turned to order, darkness to light and barrenness to life.

Today of all days, we remember the fundamental newness you give to the world through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the new beginning of all time, the hope of us all.

And this morning, in the multi-coloured company of your church on earth and in heaven, we celebrate your creation, your coming to us in Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Hymn StF 298

1 Christ the Lord is risen today;
Alleluia!
All creation joins to say:
Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high:
Alleluia!
Sing, you heavens; let earth reply:
Alleluia!

4 Soar we now where Christ has led,
Alleluia!
Following our exalted Head;
Alleluia!
Made like him, like him we rise,
Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies:
Alleluia!

2 Love's redeeming work is done,
Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won:
Alleluia!
Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;
Alleluia!
Christ has burst the gates of hell:
Alleluia!

5 King of Glory! Soul of bliss!
Alleluia!
Everlasting life is this,
Alleluia!
You to know, your power to prove,
Alleluia!
Thus to sing, and thus to love:
Alleluia!

3 Lives again our glorious King; Alleluia!
Where O death is now thy sting? Alleluia!
Once he died our souls to save; Alleluia!
Where's your victory, boasting grave? Alleluia!

Thanks be to you, loving God, for the joy at the heart of the faith we profess:
a joy not built on the sand of whim and fancy, but on the rock of Christ.

Thanks be to you, loving God, for the gospel's utterly good news,
timelessly relevant at all times, everywhere.

Thanks be to you, loving God, for the sure anchor that faith can give,
buffeted by the storms and wept by the tides, still we are not wrecked,
still we do not sink, still we can ride out the tempest.

Thanks be to you, loving God, for the utter joy of Easter,
death overcome by life and light: the pain of the cross swallowed up
in the hope of resurrection.

Thanks be to you, loving God, for the power and passion of the gospel
to transform, and complete, and make new
in Jesus' name. Amen.

All Age talk

A few years ago my wife and I enjoyed a few days in St Petersburg in Russia – one of those holidays called a city break. Our hotel was “The Dostoevsky” – most appropriate. Opposite the hotel we noticed a church which was displaying a banner. The words of course were in Russian – XPHCTOC ROCK PECE – which I didn't understand. So I asked the young lady at the reception desk of the hotel about the meaning of those words. Her face lit up, her eyes sparkled and with a smile she said: “It is our Easter Greeting – Christ is Risen. We say it when we greet one another”. I asked her how it was pronounced. What she said was something like “krispus vos krese”. That's the only Russian I know. It was clear that behind her explanation was a living faith. Probably she was also pleased that her questioner was not just asking where one

could get a good meal! What about greeting one another during this Easter season with the words: “Christ is Risen”?

Hymn StF 314

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 This joyful Eastertide,
what need is there for grieving?
Cast all your cares aside
and be not unbelieving: | 2 No work for him is vain,
no faith in him mistaken,
for Easter makes it plain
his kingdom is not shaken: |
| <i>Come share our Easter joy
that death could not imprison,
nor any power destroy
our Christ who is arisen!</i> | 3 Then put your trust in Christ,
in waking or in sleeping.
His grace on earth sufficed;
he'll never quit his keeping: |

Prayer with young people:

Day by day dear Lord, of thee three things I pray:
to see thee more clearly, to love thee more dearly, and to follow more nearly,
day by day. (StF 444 attributed to Sir Richard of Chichester)

Scripture Readings

- 1 The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 10, verses 34 - 43. Peter has responded to the request to visit an Italian centurion in Caesarea and there proclaims that the risen Christ has commanded him to preach the gospel to all people.

Then Peter began to speak to them: I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ – he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

- 2 The Letter of Paul to the Colossians, chapter 3, verses 1 – 4. Paul tells the people that having been raised with Christ they must adopt a new life style – the things above being “what is ultimately essential, transcendent, belonging to God as contrasted with matters which are below – concerned, that is, with a trivial or selfish view of life” (C F D Moule).

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed then you also will be relieved with him in glory.

- 3 The Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 28. Verses 1 – 7. “Matthew’s graveside scene is easily the most dramatic of the four: an earthquake, an angel, the guards stunned into a swoon” (Tom Wright). Is Matthew adding details to make things more spectacular? or adding what others have missed? Is mention of an earthquake a way of describing an earth shattering event similar to the tradition that the presence of angels signifies divine activity as in the birth narratives?

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb, and suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, “he has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.” This is my message to you’.

Hymn StF 311

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 The day of resurrection
tell it out abroad
the passover of gladness
the passover of God!
From death to life eternal
from earth unto the sky,
our Christ has brought us over
with hymns of victory. | 2 Our hearts be pure from evil,
that we may see a right earth,
the Lord in rays eternal
of resurrection light;
and listening to his accents,
may hear, so calm and plain,
his own” All hail!” and, hearing,
may raise the victor strain. |
|---|---|

3 Now let the earth be joyful
let earth her song begin,
the round world keep high triumph,
and all that is therein;
let all things seen and unseen
their notes of gladness blend,
for Christ the Lord is risen,
our joy that has no end.

Sermon

As our package holiday gave us considerable free time we soon visited the church across the road. In the foyer we discovered that it was called “The Church of the Icon of our Lady of Vladimir”- the icon being a 12th century treasured Byzantine work of art. Also displayed was a brief history of the church in both Russian and English. It was built in the 18th century but closed by the government in 1930. Then it was used as a library for anti-religious books, later for scientific books and finally as a clothing factory. However in 1989 it was returned to the Russian Orthodox Church and re-consecrated. This was during Mikhail Gorbachev’s term of office when he became known for his policy of *Glasnost*. Later I learned that his grandmother had him secretly baptized as a child but that although he was an admirer of St Francis he always said he was an atheist. The church was a hive of activity, employed several priests some being consulted while we were there. To me a symbol of resurrection, new life and hope.

Another symbol of resurrection and hope that has happened in our time was the peaceful transition in South Africa from minority to majority rule, an event which Trevor McDonald highlights in his recently published autobiography. He pays particular tribute to Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu in these words: “Mandela’s place in the pantheon of world statesmen is assured ...he possessed the temperament, the humanity and the vision to lead the progress of change in the country. Countless others rendered invaluable serv. Among those..is Archbishop Desmond Tutu...he pursued the struggle against apartheid armed with the power of his preaching and the sword of profound Christian belief...while Nelson Mandela languished in prison, Tutu kept the flame of hope alive”.

To turn to another area of life, there are particular crises of real concern: worldwide poverty and injustice, and environmental care and climate change. With regard to the latter some believe the point of no return is not far away. The tasks are tremendous. Fortunately there are many organizations responding to personal needs and working for global changes in the way the earth is managed – Christian Aid, Tearfund, Oxfam, the Fair Trade Foundation and our Methodist All

We Can to name a few. They all regularly mention particular projects such as improving the agricultural management, organizing co-operatives and marketing skills that provide people and communities with a better quality of life. Participation in continuous prayer is also sought the world over for important United Nations' climate change conferences to do with climate justice especially as it is the poorest communities which are the first to suffer when there are natural disasters such as drought or flood (caid.org.uk/prayerchain). We can be grateful too for people like Greta Thurnberg, the teenager who sparked a global movement for climate change by speaking outside the Swedish Parliament, in our own Parliament Square and at many international meetings including those of the United Nations. Some of her speeches can be found in her little book "No One is Too Small to Make a Difference". As long as there are such organizations and people around, concerned with transforming people's lives and working for change, there is hope for a better world, a fairer world, and one in which all people live with freedom and dignity, justice and peace, compassion and hope. We also must contribute to that hope by caring for the environment.

Finally, the promise of Jesus: "I am with you always to the end of time". I recall the late Mother Theresa once saying that we meet Jesus sometimes in the poorest of the poor and sometimes through bread and wine. We meet him when we both give and receive. That's why I suggested before this service that you have a piece of bread within reach. When Jesus was with his disciples in the upper room we read that he took a loaf of bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me". Jesus is not asking his disciples to remember him as the Jesus of history or a particular occasion in the past but to recall his presence – "Do this to recall that I am with you". This is what remembrance is about. We may do this today. The promise still stands. For the risen Jesus, thanks be to God. Alleluia. Amen.

Hymn StF 297

- 1 Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.
The cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises ring.
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.
- 2 Christ is alive! No longer bound
To distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time.

- 3 In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, where even hope has died.
- 4 Women and men, in age and youth,
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth,
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.
- 5 Christ is alive and comes to bring
good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring
with joy, with justice, love and praise.

Intercessions

Lord, as we celebrate your resurrection, strengthen your Church to tell the Good News to the whole world.

Lord Jesus, as we rejoice in your risen presence, we pray that the world will know your peace.

We remember all who walk in darkness and who are heavily burdened. We pray for all who have lost hope and who despair. We ask your blessing on all who are chronically ill and those who can no longer cope on their own. We pray for all who are approaching death and their loved ones who are caring for them.

Risen Lord, we ask that we might share in your resurrection and triumph over darkness and death. We ask your blessing upon our friends and loved ones who are departed from us. May they have a share with your saints in glory.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn StF 313

- 1 Thine be 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 be the glory,
risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory
Thou o'er death hast won.*

2 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:

3 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:

The God of peace be with all of you (Romans 15.33)

Christ our King
make us faithful and strong to do his will
that we may reign with him in glory;
and may almighty God bless us,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Alleluia!
Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Alleluia!