

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



20TH APRIL 2025

EASTER DAY



WORSHIP AT HOME

This time is an opportunity to be still, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within.

Set aside a time for this practice; prepare yourself, as you might for a usual Sunday morning and remember that there are others from the congregation gathering at the same time as you. There are also many from the church around the globe who are gathering to seek the presence of God as we are. We join with them all.

Prepare a space in the house; find a comfortable chair, light a candle, turn off distracting noises and close the door if that will help you to be still. This is something that does not need to be hurried.

SETTING THE SCENE FOR EASTER DAY 2025

- Our Good Friday service concluded with Jesus saying, 'It is finished' and giving up his spirit
- It was the day of preparation for the Sabbath. The Jews did not want the bodies of Jesus and those crucified with him left on the crosses.
- With permission from Pilate, Joseph of Arimathea removed Jesus' body
- Jesus' body was wrapped in linen cloths with myrrh and aloes according to Jewish custom and laid in a new tomb.

EASTER DAY

Early on Sunday morning when it was still dark it was discovered that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance of the tomb and Jesus body was gone.

He is risen

He is risen indeed

GREETING:

The Lord be with you:

And also with you

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

This is the day the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it

CALL TO WORSHIP:

¹⁹[Lord] open to me the gates of righteousness,

that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.

²⁰This is the gate of the Lord;

the righteous shall enter through it.

²¹I thank you that you have answered me

and have become my salvation.

²²The stone that the builders rejected

has become the chief cornerstone.

²³This is the Lord's doing;

it is marvellous in our eyes.

²⁴This is the day that the Lord has made;

let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24.

HYMN TIS 370: 'Christ the Lord is risen today'

PRAYERS OF ADORATION, CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON:

ADORATION

Let us pray

Holy God, our Salvation:
you roll away the power of sin,

bringing forth the One
who makes everything alive.

Out of the garden
of violence and hate
which evil has planted,

you bring forth
a spring harvest
of love and forgiveness.

Jesus Christ, Creation's Gardener:
you went into the grave
to drive out the power of the world;
you shut the doors
of pain and death
and open the gates of glory
to those who trust in you
and follow, as your faithful servants.

Holy Spirit, Anointer of new life:
you speak
and open our eyes to faith;
you touch our lips
with glad songs of victory;
you roll away our fears
so we can tell everyone
we have seen the Risen Lord.

God in Community, Holy in One,
on this great day of Easter, all praise be to your blessed name
-Brief time of silence-

CONFESSION

On this first day of the week, Emptier of tombs, we must admit that we have not lived faithfully the last few days. It is not that we have done great evil; we simply have failed to do the good. It is not so much that we have caused hurt, but we have not brought healing. It is not that we have trouble believing in the event of Easter, we have difficulty speaking about this day to our friends and neighbours.

Call us by name, Redeemer of all creation, so we might hear your words of mercy. You have not given us over to despair, but handed us hope. You have not ignored our emptiness, but filled us with the Bread of Heaven. You do not hand us over to death, but raise us to new life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, in whose name we pray.
Amen

-Silence is kept-

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

What a day! Easter Day! God's dawn of new hope, new mercy, new life.
On this first day and every day, we can walk tall as God's people, forgiven and made whole.

Rise then, to new life my brothers and sisters in Christ, because, through the Crucified-Risen One,

OUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hallelujah, Praise the Lord!

SCRIPTURE: Read by Lorraine Denniston

Your word, O Lord is a lamp to our feet:

A light to our path

ACTS 10:34-43

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 the 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.'

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-11

Now I should remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to someone untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

LUKE 24:1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.' Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by

themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Christ is risen. Alleluia:

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

HYMN TIS 382: ‘Now the green blade rises’

SERMON: How much is enough?

Happy Easter my dear friends

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH!?

Here on this Easter Day 2025 might I remind you that we are slap-bang in the middle of an election campaign, in case you are not aware of the fact.

And here’s the pity!

It’s a generalization, but both of the political leaders of the major parties, are basically pitching their campaigns around the answer to the question:

‘How much will I have to give them to win them over to my side?’ What will be enough?

Tax cuts and fuel excise cuts, and energy grants and free Dr appointments etc etc! And as a corollary to that first question - another one:

‘How best can I denigrate what the other side is offering?’ What will be enough?

Now why do I think this is a pity?

If I am honest, I will be happy to benefit from these offers from the politicians. Because, undoubtedly, there is a ‘cost of living crisis’ and there is a growing gap between the haves and the have nots! Please correct me if I am wrong, but in the community at large, there is a willingness to take all that is on offer, all I can get.

How much is enough?

So, as we arrive at this momentous season, which is at the heart of the Christian faith, namely, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are in the middle of a season of ‘election’ where the key questions are about getting or taking:

HOW MUCH CAN I GET – out of this one OR that one or the other one? - That’s a ‘crowd’ question! And we are in the crowd.

On the other hand, the Political Leaders also ask a similar question.

HOW CAN I GET WHAT I WANT- power and authority and status over others?

Too simplistic!?! – Maybe – but the point I want to make is... .

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH? HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

Put another way

What does the Leader really need to get?

AND

What do the members of the CROWD really need to get?

WHAT IS ENOUGH?

- hesitate -

Easter is about Jesus giving, and me and you and people of all time, and the whole created order GETTING a gift beyond imagining!

Getting What!?

The free gift of an abundant new life!

If this is truth, shouldn't we make Jesus Leader of all!? Then and now! Then we will ALL GET what we need, and it will be ENOUGH and overflowing – for all!!

BUT IS IT AS SIMPLE AS THAT, you say!?

Indeed, the analysis I have shared above is certainly **not** the one that the FIRST followers of Jesus came to when they were confronted by the empty tomb! They were PERPLEXED by the resurrection – that new life, the rising from the dead of Jesus, created fear.

A WLTTW commentary by Gregor Henerson suggests terror as well. I quote.

“Perplexed! The women were perplexed at finding the stone rolled away from the tomb and the tomb empty! Wow! An understatement, surely. Then we're told they were terrified when two men in dazzling clothes appeared and said Jesus had risen from the dead. Imagine how panicked they must have felt, how shaky, trying to absorb the enormity of what they'd just seen and heard. It's no surprise the disciples did not believe the women, although the women's perplexed demeanor must have made the disciples wonder. According to Luke, Peter alone thinks it's worth checking, finds the empty tomb, and goes home in amazement.”

Perplexed, terrified, Shaky, panicked and disbelieving! Gregor goes on.

“The women appear to have had no idea that Jesus will rise from the dead, and nor do the men. As with all the gospel narratives about the first Easter, the unexpectedness of the event and the fear and terror it arouses, are good evidence that something truly astonishing has happened.”

That is, these scary emotions are good evidence that something astonishing has happened in the lives of the first disciples and eventually it transformed them from perplexed, cowardly, frightened, timid followers at Jesus' death and subsequent resurrection from the dead, into bold, courageous advocates of the Word, who risked life and limb for Jesus. The book of Acts is replete with such stories. Most of the disciples were martyred for their faith.

The Resurrection is utterly and preposterously transformational. There is something incredibly alarming - way beyond 'normal' expectations of life and death. Something that once seen, though startling and baffling, is also so compelling that it *'demands my soul, my life, my all.'* (to quote Issac Watts the hymn writer.)

The empty tomb confronts us with the fearful prospect that I, YES EVEN ME, EVEN YOU, HAVE BEEN GIVEN A NEW LIFE OF PURE LOVE. It “just” needs to be accepted – taken up. Now in a world where everything has a price tag and the ultimate cultural aim is to make as much money as possible, such an offer is impossible, ludicrous and laughable.

Such a radical transformative gift of change in our lives overwhelms us. So, we might react as follows: ‘OH, not me, no, I don't deserve that... I'm unworthy unclean, OR I don't want it, I am content with my life as it is. It can't be real'

AND if I'm honest, this gift both scares the living daylight out of me and thrills me to the very bottom of my being!

But... here's the thing

When I take the plunge and accept this amazing gift, and allow it to shape my life, then THERE is power beyond imagining, right there! The Love of Jesus and the grace of God, that is enough for all we face in life and death. That is enough!
My life, your life, the world's life, transformed by the love and grace of God.

So, I leave us with a challenge.

Yes, GET your Easter eggs, joyfully receive them but recognize in them the terrifyingly astonishing gift of Jesus' new life – and GIVE your Easter eggs, not just for the chocolate 'hit', but as a sign the transformation of Jesus' new life.

Can I make a plea – beg you – let Jesus' Resurrection love transform you from top to bottom, from inside to outside, in mind and body, in spirit and soul, in living and dying, so that all the fear and trembling and being perplexed and even dying, might be as **nothing**, compared to the wonder of this Jesus, the Crucified-Risen one, in your life and in the life of the world.

And lest you think this all too other worldly – use your gift of resurrection love for rocky marriages and strained relationships, in friendships that have soured, in family squabbles. Ask yourself how your gift of resurrection love might touch/reach/change a world struggling with war, addiction, poverty, misogyny, racism? How does your gift of Easter love leap off the calendar and into your hearts and lives and the life of the world? That loving leap is 'more than enough!'

A poem from a Dr J to finish, entitled

More than Enough

How much is enough?

Can you measure the length of each scar on his back?

Can you trace the depth of each gash and follow each track?

Can you extract and analyze sweat, like drops of blood?

Can you remove water and blood and then weigh the good?

Can you collect the tears and hold them in a vial?

Can you assess the shame and disgrace of a trumped up trial?

How much is enough?

One more mocking bow, one more man to spit in his face,

One more taunting gesture, one more mark of disgrace.

One more lash, one more gash, one more blow to the head,

As he endured the cross, despising the shame as he bled.

To smash once more, one blow short of certain death.

He cried, "It is finished" then yielded his last breath.

How much is enough?

Who can assess the worth of his blood and establish a price

for the precious Lamb of God, unblemished, sinless sacrifice?

God's bounty of mercy is sufficient. His deep love will suffice.

Despite the deficit, God balances each account to set it right.

Where sin once had free reign, now grace has abounded instead.

The Lord himself provided the Lamb, whom He raised from the dead.

In His gracious goodness Jehovah-Jireh reminds us

That He is more than enough, yes, so much more than enough.

Dr J's Apothecary Shoppe

<https://drlej.wordpress.com/2013/03/31/reflections-of-the-resurrection-three-poems-and-three-musical-compositions/>

SO, right now, let us simply lose ourselves in the awe and wonder and praise of this astonishing gift given – more than enough!

Hallelujah

Jesus the Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Hallelujah

Amen

HYMN TIS 361: ‘The day of resurrection’

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE: Prepared by Mardie Townsend

"As we prepare for our prayers for others, we light this candle to remember all those who are part of our church community but who are not at worship with us today."

Light the candle.

Let us pray.

Throughout the church, across the world, please loving God, may the message of the living Christ penetrate beneath the level of familiarity, and begin to awaken that which is lost and dying within the human spirit.

Come living Christ,

Come among us and make all things new.

For brilliant thinkers we pray, those whose thoughts divert them into doubts and enigmas that leave a genius confused while little children dance freely into your kingdom.

Come living Christ,

Come among us with the priceless gift of faith.

For confused minds we pray, those who have been over impressed with smart theories or bullied around by sharper intellects, and who this day live like puppets.

Come living Christ,

Come among us with truth that sets prisoners free.

For perverted souls we pray, those who for the sake of varied lusts have told lies to themselves so often that they now believe their own crooked self-justifications.

Come living Christ,

Come among us with your light and make us see.

For thirsty minds we pray, those who are awakening to questions previously ignored, or who are dissatisfied with the answers of religious quacks and social dogmatists.

Come living Christ,

Come among us with waters that bubble up with eternal life.

For wounded souls and bodies we pray; those in hospitals and clinics, those who watch by their beds, and those who are grieving and waiting for funerals later in the week.

Come living Christ,

Come among us with rest for the weary and peace for the distraught..

For our own loved ones we pray, some with faith and others on the fringe, those who are strong and others who are weak, some who are confident and others who are riddled with anxieties, those close at hand and those who are far away in body or spirit.

Come living Christ,

Come among, with that grace which shows its perfection in human weakness.

Amen! Even so come, Lord Jesus.

Amen!

LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray together, 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.

HYMN TIS 380: 'Thine be the glory'

DISMISSAL:

Let us go with God into the world.
**We will offer healing and hope to all
who wander in the shadows of life.**
Let us go with Jesus to serve others.
**We will listen to the ignored;
we will speak out for the forgotten.**
Let us go with the Spirit to share steadfast love.
**We will hold on to the fallen;
we will rebuild shattered communities.**

© Thom M. Shuman

BLESSING:

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

The deathless joy of Christ Jesus will uplift you,
the everlasting love of God will embrace you,
the inner warmth of the Spirit will encourage you, today and ever more.
Today and evermore. Amen!

RECESSIONAL HYMN TIS 389: Here the Bells Ringing



POSTLUDE

You can find a copy of today's sermon along with other congregational information on the church website.

Music and Words reproduced with permission under CCLI licenses

Presider: Rev Ron Townsend

Music: Peter Hurley

Church Office

Tuesdays, 9.30am-1.30pm

Fridays, 9.30am-2.30pm

Phone: 0411 958 127

office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au

Website: www.ormondunitingchurch.org

NEWS & NOTICES